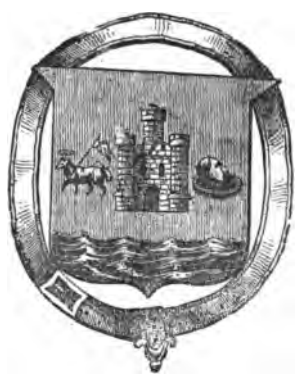
Reminiscences

OF

"AULD AYR."



Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head.

The Vision.

EDINBURGH: JAMES STILLIE.

1864.

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Introductory Sketch.

We are not quite wrinkled enough for an octogenarian, yet our reminiscences of the "good town" penetrate pretty far into the beginning of the present century. Ayr had not then so entirely shaken off its ancient features as it has of late years. At the Townhead, part of the old port, or gateway, still jutted out upon the pavement, in connection with the house now called the "Tam o' Shanter Tavern." The old tower, popularly known as "Wallace Tower," continued to dignify the corner of the Mill Vennel, in all the sombreness of ancient times.

Wallace Tower.

It is uncertain how this old building came by the designation of "Wallace Tower." It is invariably called the *Auld Tower* in the Town Records. It was purchased by the town from Adam Ritchie, a burgess, in 1673. It had belonged previously to Cathcart of Carbieston, and had, with adjacent buildings, probably formed his town residence. The belfry, or two upper stories, was a modern erection, having been put up in 1731. The tower had originally been a rude square edifice, consisting only of an upper and under flat. In 1834, it was resolved to face the building with hewn stone; but though the walls were of immense thickness, it had no sunk foundation, and could not stand

the operation. It had, therefore, to be entirely removed, and a new tower built.

The effect of local allusions, in moving to greater exertions in battle and at sea, has been often exemplified. Captain Andrew, belonging to Ayr, found his ship one boisterous night in extreme danger. A high sea was running, and all hands had been overwrought to such an extent that he had well-nigh given up hope. At last he made his way to the cabin, and bringing up a case bottle and tumbler, he assembled his crew around him, and drinking first himself, he handed round the glass to all in turn, saying, "Tak that, lads, it 's better than the Auld Tower in yir guts!" Most of the men belonged to Ayr—the effect was electric. To work they again went, with a resolution which overcame all difficulties, and the vessel was saved.

The Meal-market and Hay-weighs crowned the causeway of the High Street; and the "Back o' the Isle" bore testimony to the tradition that the block of houses and shops in front occupied the site of the original Tolbuith of Ayr, in which, Blind Harry tells us, the great Scottish patriot, Sir William Wallace, was confined, a fact commemorated by a figure of the stalwart warrior, placed in a niche of the house built by "Whisky Henry Cowan," in New Market Street. This well-known and wealthy spirit merchant was induced to erect the effigy, because the old house which he took down to make room for the new one had formed part of the old Tolbuith, and contained a carved head, placed in the front wall, said to have been a bust of the "Wicht Wallace."

On the north side of the High Street, there also remained the large, substantial looking three-story house, known to have belonged to the *Osbornes*, from whom the celebrated "Maggie Osborne," burned at the Malt-Cross as a witch, some time about the middle of the seventeenth century. The exact date of her immolation has not been ascertained. Neither the Town Council books, nor the Books of Adjournal at Edinburgh contain any account of her trial; but some of the volumes of the latter are amissing, which may account for the omission. There is also a blank in the Presbytery Books from 1651 to 1681, between which years her martyrdom is generally supposed to have taken place.

The name of Margaret Osburne, however, occurs in the Council minutes as follows:—"21st Nov. 1648. The Counsell also appoints *Margaret Osburn* to receave the key of the house quherin Isobell Pyper died, under suspicioune of the infectioune, fra John Fergusson, ane of the quarter masteris, and to intromett with the gudis of the house, and to be furthcomand to their said honouris, conforme to ane inventure thairof, to be taken and sett doune in wryt." This, in all likelihood, was the veritable Margaret Osburne. She was well-connected, and tradition says that she was a strong-minded, intelligent woman, much above the superstitious ideas of the time. She manifested this by her courage during the prevalence of the *Pest*, to which the minute refers.

The large turreted house next to that of "Maggie Osburne," now removed, was originally built by John Blair of Adamton. Subsequently it became the town residence of Chalmers of Gadgirth. At the time we refer to, part of it was occupied by the "Queen's Head" public house. Between the two tenements a lane led down to the river Ayr, immediately above the "Auld Brig," where a ford existed prior to the building of the bridge. Tradition says it was constructed at the expense of two maiden ladies of the name of Lowe, who left the bulk of their fortune for the purpose. Previous to this many lives were annually lost, during the floods in winter and spring, in attempting to cross the ford. The precise age of the bridge is unknown; but, from the "Obit Book of Ayr," wherein the lane leading to the ford is mentioned in 1470, and the bridge in 1525, it seems to have been built between these two dates. In a note to the poem of "The

Old Bridge.

Brigs of Ayr," by Burns, it is said to have been built in the reign of Alexander III., but this is erroneous. In the time of Wallace, there was only a "Brig of Tre" [a timber bridge] over the Clyde at Glasgow. Of the "Auld Brig," Burns makes the *New* say—

> "Will your poor narrow footpath o' a street,
> Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet;
> Your ruin'd, formless bulk o' stane an' lime,
> Compare wi' bonnie brigs o' modern time!"

The *Fish-Cross*, round which the fish-wives with their creels of newly-hailed fish used to congregate, pointed back to the time when, like the house where Count Hamilton, author of the "Memoirs of Grammont," in the same locality was born, all the places of business were mere booths. Mungo Campbell, merchant, was among the first to introduce the new order of things; and he, in 1700, obtained leave from the magistrates and Council, to "build a little chop in the front of his tenement on the west side of Sandgate;" and the year following, Provost Moor was permitted to build a fore shop under the pillars of his house.

The Fish-Cross.

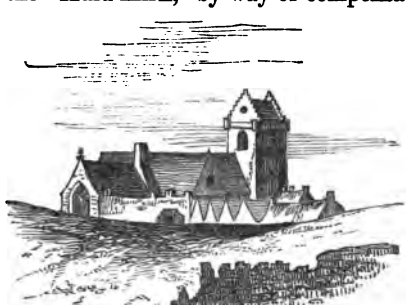
The "Old Steeple," or "Dungeon Clock," as Burns has it, crowned the rising ground in the centre of the Sandgate. It seems to have been erected in lieu of the Old Tolbuith, in High Street, but at what time, no record yet discovered says. It remained without a steeple, however, till 1614, when a kind of belfry and bell, "for the use of the town and the kirk," were put up at the expense of the town. A new steeple was projected in 1697, but the means of the burgh had so much declined, that, in 1715, it had only reached the first storey. It was not till about 1726

that, a portion of the stones of St. John's kirk and the citadel having been acquired for the purpose, the steeple was completed.

The *Malt-Cross*, where *Maggie Osburne* suffered, was removed soon after 1785, when the "New Brig," which opened up the passage to the Sandgate, was erected. Its demolition is to be regretted, and many wish that, like the Cross of Edinburgh, it could be restored. The town house of the Loudoun family, who, for many centuries were hereditary Sheriffs of Ayr, still exists in a modified form in the Boat Vennel.

The Malt Cross.

The outer walls of Cromwell's Fort, built in 1655, with the tower of St. John's Kirk, remained pretty entire in the early part of this century. It embraced all the ground between the sea and Fort Street, much of it having formed the church-yard of the kirk. This old fabric continued to be the parish church of Ayr, long after the Reformation, down till appropriated by Cromwell in 1652, when he built what is now known as the "Auld Kirk," by way of compensation to the parishioners. The Fort continued to be garrisoned during the Cromwellian period. After the Restoration, in 1660, it was dismantled, and the buildings and ground gifted to the Earl of Eglinton, by way of compensation for



St. John's Kirk.

the heavy losses his family had sustained during the civil wars. Under the name of Montgomerieston it was created a burgh of regality; and a considerable trade carried on in it for some time. It was eventually acquired by four of the merchants of Ayr in 1726.

The harbour, with the old range of store houses, existed in a very different state from what it does now. The *Ratton Quary*, and the *Pat Well*, were then noted places of resort by all the small craft from Arran, and along the coast, as well as numerous thirsty denizens who esteemed good cold water. The well was famous for infusing tea.

In short, early in the century, the town of Ayr could boast of little improvement in the way of building. Wellington Square, no doubt, had been completed, and the County Buildings erected; but, with these exceptions, conceive that there were no railway termini at the Harbour or Townhead, and scarcely one of the many elegant buildings which now adorn the place. Hardly a single villa existed beyond Wellington Square, on the Race Course Road, or any of the various fine openings connecting it with the High Road.

Think of Ayr proper as consisting of the High Street, Carrick Vennel, Mill Street and Mill Vennel, Old and New Bridge Streets, Sandgate, and Wellington Square—and consider that neither gas nor water had been introduced, and that not a policeman was to be seen in town or country, save two discreet old burgh officers, with scarlet coats, who marched before the magistrates to church on Sunday, with halberts over their shoulders, and were a source of much amusement to the juveniles during the week.

Notwithstanding this sort of still-water view of Ayr, the burgh claims a high degree of antiquity—even stretching back to the time of the Romans. It formed the sort of terminus to the Roman Road, from the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright by Dalmellington and the river Doon, until it crossed the country above the Dalrymple bend towards the Ayr, which it followed to the sea. Some remains of the Romans have been discovered in Ayr and the neighbourhood. The name is, of course derived from the river, which separates the old from the new town.

As a royal burgh Ayr owes its creation to William the Lion in 1197. In his charter the monarch states that he had made a burgh at his *new Castle* of Ayr. This Castle, which was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt, continued down throughout the war of independence, and had been strongly garrisoned in 1263, to watch the progress of Haco's invasion of Scotland. It is said to have been even captured by the Norwegians. After Bannockburn, when, in 1314, Edward

Seal and Arms.

Bruce passed over to aid the Irish in throwing off the Saxon yoke, his army of "full seven thousand men and mair," were garrisoned in the Castle, and it is said to have existed down to 1652, when Cromwell built the fort; but this is doubtful, as no mention is made of it in the Council Books, long prior to that period. It occupied, it is said, the rising ground behind the Academy, and was probably washed by the river. The seal of the burgh is supposed to have been adopted from the Castle. It consists of three towers, with the emblems of St. John the Baptist; but, as in the case of Maybole, it may represent the original tolbooth. The preceding wood-cut of the arms is from a "Testificate" by the magistrates of Ayr in 1411.

The town of Ayr occupies a prominent place in the national history, both in the war of independence and throughout the religious struggle in later times. The early career of Wallace is inseparably connected with it, and John Welsh was minister of Ayr in 1604. The principles of the Reformation were warmly appreciated by the citizens, and some of the martyrs are entombed in the "Auld Kirkyard." When moderate views crept into the Church of Scotland, several ministers of the west were caught by the infection, and *heresy* in Ayrshire may be said to have reached its climax when the Rev. Dr. M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr, published, in 1786, his "Essay on the Death of Christ." The Doctor's views were attacked right and left, but it was not till his friend and neighbour, Dr. William Peebles of the Newton, in a centenary sermon in 1788, denounced the sermon as heretical, that he was provoked to reply. It is in reference to this affair that Burns, in "The Kirk's Alarm," says—

Poet Willie, Poet Willie,
Gi'e the Doctor a volley
Wi' your 'liberty's chain' and your wit," &c.

Dr. M'Gill lies interred in Ayr churchyard.

The Rev. Dr. Dalrymple was the colleague of Dr. M'Gill, and suspected of entertaining similar opinions. It is of this gentleman that Burns says—

"D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild,
Tho' your heart's like a child,
And your life like the new driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye,
Auld Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three's ane and twa."

It is a curious fact that John Murdoch, to whom Burns is said to have owed so much as his early tutor, was dismissed from the office of teacher of the burgh school of Ayr, for reviling the reverend gentleman. Murdoch was appointed one of the English schoolmasters of the burgh, 4th November, 1772, and a petition having been laid before the magistrates, by James Neill, procurator-fiscal, he was dismissed from the office, 14th

February 1776. The complaint against Murdoch was that he did, "particularly within the house of Mrs. Tenant, innkeeper in Ayr, as well as in the house of Patrick Auld, weaver in Ayr, utter the following, or such like unworthy, base, reproachful, and wicked expressions, viz., that he, Dr. William Dalrymple, was as revengeful as hell, and as false as the devil; and that he was a liar, or a damned liar: that he, the said John Murdoch, also called Mr. Dalrymple a hypocrite, or accused him of hypocrisy." The magistrates declared Murdoch to be unworthy the office he held, and did "unanimously dismiss him from the said office accordingly, and find him incapable of teaching, either publicly or privately, within the burgh and parish of Ayr, in all time coming."

The teacher and his pupil seemed to have entertained different opinions as to the Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, but the probability is that Murdoch had spoken unguardedly, and in a moment of irritation. "Dalrymple mild" was universally esteemed. He was a native of Ayr, and at his death, in 1814, had been sixty-eight years minister of the first charge.

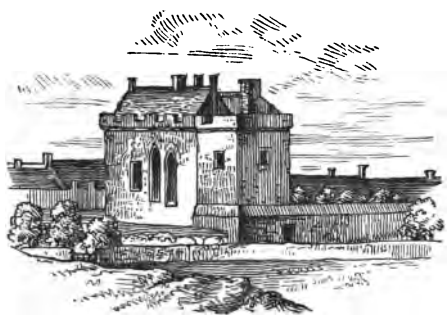
In ecclesiastical matters, under the old regimen, Ayr did not occupy a high position, though there was no want of religious houses. Besides the Church of St. John's—which is mentioned in connection with the monks of Paisley as early as 1233, and the patronage of which belonged to the Crown—it contained the monastery of the *Black Friars*, founded by William, Bishop of St. Andrews, in 1230. It stood near to the site of the present old church, on the banks of the river; also the monastery of the *Grey Friars*, founded by the inhabitants in 1472. Both of these establishments were demolished at the Reformation.

Before the improvement of the Clyde, the harbour of Ayr was considered one of the most important on the west coast, and the town enjoyed a considerable foreign trade in consequence.

The *Newton*, or New-town-upon-Ayr, is by no means a modern place. It existed in the days of Wallace, and how long before is unknown. It is mentioned, however, in the charter founding the religious house of Dalmulin, in 1208, and Robert the Bruce is understood to have conferred a grant of land and the freedom of the burgh upon forty-eight indi-

viduals who had distinguished themselves at the battle of Bannockburn. The original charter is lost, but the *freedoms*, as they were called, continued to be held upon the same principle down to within these few years, when they were divided by mutual agreement among the existing holders.

There was a strong house, called the *Castle of Newton*, which Bœtius says was taken by Haco prior to the battle of Largs in 1263. It belonged to Adam Wallace, a branch of the Craigie family, in 1468. With the lands of Sanquhar, it was acquired by Sir William Hamilton, Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, in the reign of James V., and



Newton Castle.

became the residence of his family. It was called Sanquhar-Hamilton from that circumstance. In 1585, it was temporarily appropriated by the Earl of Arran, and finally acquired by the Craigie family in 1588, after which Newton Castle became their principal residence. It is said to have been removed in 1701, though old people speak of its ruins much later. It stood "on the east side of the mill-lade, at the south-west side of the toun" of Newton, between Garden Street and the Old Bridge.

The old coach road led through Wallacetown towards the Old Bridge, and although the principal approach to Ayr from the north is now by the main street of Newton, we recollect when there was no passage that way, the mill-lead running down the middle of the street uncovered. The mill

itself, an old huge building, partly inhabited, stood nearly in the middle of the street; but, before the river wall was built, the green bank must have sloped gently down to the river, into which the lead emptied itself.

Add to our description of what the old and new towns were *sixty years ago*, that a continual feud prevailed between the boys of the opposite sides of the river, and that, when the schools were let loose on Saturdays, a sturdy stone battle, or *bicker*, usually took place, the great point being to take and retain the bridge. Occasionally apprentice lads, and even grown-up persons took part in the fray. When the out-going tide happened to suit, the combatants preferred the bed of the river, where a more plentiful supply of stones could be had, and not unfrequently parties had to be carried from the scene of strife sorely battered and bleeding.

The Old Grammar School and Academy.

THE means of education appears to have existed in Ayr at an early period. The "master of the school of Ayr" is mentioned in a document bearing the date of 1233. The school was connected with St. John's Church. In 1519, "Maister Gawane Ross," one of the chaplains, had a salary granted to him by the Town Council for officiating as high school master, and from that period downwards till the Reformation that official seems invariably to have belonged to the Church. There was also a teacher of music for the parish. In 1536 Robert Paterson was employed as organist, and to "teiche ane sang scule." In 1583, the teacher of the "sang scule" was not only to be an accomplished singer, but able to "play upon the *pynnatre*."* Reading and writing were also conjoined with the music; but whether this was a separate institution from the burgh school does not appear. It is thus evident, however, that the magistrates

* Spinnet.

took a special charge of the educational appliances before as well as since the Reformation.

In 1666, after appointing William Wallace to be schoolmaster, they ordain "intimatione, by touk of drum, to be putt throw the toune, for entering of the youth to the schule, and *nane to teach grahamer forsaid, onlie the said Mr. William and his Doctor* (assistant);" and in 1687, they "discharge all other Scots (*i.e.* English) or musick schools to be keepit within said burgh."

In 1726, the Doctor, or Rector, of the grammar school had not only to be skilful in the Greek and Latin tongues, but also able to teach writing, navigation, arithmetic, and book-keeping. Mair, the celebrated grammarian, was appointed rector in 1727, and taught these branches for many years.

The Burgh School stood at the head of the School Vennel, or what is now called Academy Street. It was an old-fashioned building, with a thatched roof. Having served its day, a committee of gentlemen, chiefly through the influence of the late John Fergusson of Doonholm, was formed in 1794, who stated in their prospectus that "it was proposed to engage masters of distinguished abilities for teaching writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, geography, algebra, mathematics, mechanics, navigation, astronomy, natural and experimental philosophy, together with a sketch of natural history; all which, with schools for English, Latin, Greek, French, drawing, and music, to be included in one seminary."

The committee were aided by a liberal grant from the town's funds, and were successful in their application for subscriptions. The new school was in operation in 1797, but the building of the academy was not commenced till 1798. The directors, who, in that year, obtained a charter of incorporation, had been very successful in their appointment of the staff of teachers; and under the successive rectors, Meikleham, Jackson, and Ballingall—men of no ordinary mind—the institution was highly successful, and acquired a reputation which, notwithstanding the numerous excellent seminaries now in the county, it still, in a great measure, retains. The chief object of the teachers has been to lay a good foundation, rather than to rear the ornamental;

and many of the students of Ayr Academy have distinguished themselves wherever their lot has been cast. The names of Sir Charles Shaw, and the late General Neill, will not be soon forgotten; nor those of Lords Cowan and Ardmillan, of the Court of Session, all natives of Ayrshire, and students of the Academy. Indeed, Lords Cowan and Ardmillan have, by their talents and sound decisions, added renown to the institution—a renown which suggests the remark, that as the Academy continues to be conducted on the principles by which it has hitherto been characterised, parents and guardians in Ayr have at hand the means of giving those under their charge a sound and liberal education at a moderate cost —no mean privilege. Long may Ayr Academy flourish! As Cowper says:—

"Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise;
We love the play-place of our early days;
* * * * * *
This fond attachment to the well-known place,
Where first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it e'en in age, and at our latest day."

The late Mr. Taylor, writing master, a man of high and varied genius, taught in the old Grammar School and Academy for the long period of sixty-five years.

"The Wicked Toun o' Ayr"—Why so Called.

It is singular that no correspondent of "Notes and Queries," so far as we are aware, has hitherto made inquiry as to how this very respectable royal burgh came to be distinguished—par excellence—as "the wicked town." It is perhaps not a very gracious subject to dilate upon, and its worthy denizens may not thank us for our voluntary labour in elucidating the point, still, as we view the matter merely in an antiquarian light, we may be held exonerated of all improper feelings on the subject.

The poet Burns must be regarded as the first to put the daring imputation into print. He it is who has given a wide-world celebrity to the scandal. *Vide* his clever poem, "The Ordination:"—

> "Now, Robertson, harangue nae mair,
> But steek your gab for ever;
> Or try the *wicked toun o' Ayr*,
> For there they'll think you clever."

It is not to be conceived, at the same time, that Burns was the fabricator of the libel. He merely gave it currency. Had he coined the accusation for the nonce, his satire would have fallen pointless. But having reiterated a well understood fama it became powerful, and is likely to be as lasting as the town itself. Burns latterly seems to have felt some compunction on the subject—some slight twinge of conscience for having so "damned to immortal fame" the ancient capital of his native county; and, as in his "Elegy on Tam Samson," he hastened to make amends by a *per contra*, in the well known lines in "Tam o' Shanter,"—

> "Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
> For honest men and bonnie lasses."

Complimentary and true as these lines may be, however, nothing can wash out the original stain, and "the wicked toun of Ayr" remains indelibly imprinted on her escutcheon. We, at the same time, by no means coincide in the justice of the accusation, but, as a matter of curiosity, shall endeavour to account for its origin.

As the county town, and the consequent resort of the principal proprietors of the vicinity, Ayr became the focus of many of those feuds by which the district was disturbed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was particularly the case in regard to the quarrels of the Kennedies of Carrick and the Craufurds and Campbells of Kyle —all of which clans had numerous cadets and partizans among the burgesses. In the great feud between the Cassilis and Bargany branches of the Kennedies, which terminated in the "Auchindraine Tragedy" (11th May, 1602), the inhabitants of Ayr took a decided part. It was while these dissensions were at their height (between February and November of the above year) that the celebrated John Welsh became minister of Ayr. Although Popery had been nominally abolished in 1560, he was the first to preach, under the new regime, in the ancient parish church of St. John. According to his own statement, as well as that of his biographers, he found the burgh in a very *wicked* state indeed. "When he had first taken up his residence in that town," say they, "the place was so divided into factions, and filled with bloody conflicts, a man could hardly walk the streets with safety; wherefore Mr. Welsh made it his first undertaking to remove the bloody quarrellings, but he found it a very difficult work; yet such was his earnestness to pursue his design that many times he would rush betwixt two parties of men fighting, even in the midst of blood and wounds. He used to cover his head with a head-piece before he went to separate these bloody enemies, but would never use a sword, that they might see he came for peace, and not for war; and so by little and little he made the town a peaceable habitation. His manner was, after he had ended a skirmish amongst his neighbours, and reconciled these bitter enemies, to cause cover a table upon the street, and there brought the enemies together; and, beginning with prayer, he persuaded them to profess themselves friends, and then to eat and drink together. Then last of all he ended the work with singing a psalm: and after the rude people began to observe his example, and listen to his heavenly doctrine, he came quickly to that respect amongst them, that he became not only a necessary counsellor, without whose counsel they would do nothing, but an example to imitate; and so he buried the bloody quarrels."

Here, in these feuds, and the state in which Welsh is said to have found the community, we have one pretty satisfactory reason for the designation—"the wicked toun o' Ayr." Nor must it be forgotten that, down to the period of the Reformation, the royal burgh had been the seat of two dominical establishments—the Black and Grey Friars—besides the parish church, which supported a numerous priesthood. The inhabitants had therefore been thoroughly innoculated with the practices and pastimes tolerated under the Popish system; and, although many of the citizens had stood boldly forward in the ranks of reform, still, when the besom of Calvinism came to be strictly applied in sweeping up the "highways and by-ways," with a view to a pure renovation, it was found that a pretty numerous residue were inclined to adhere to their old pursuits and pleasures. This was the case especially in reference to the Sabbath day. The session-books record many cases of desecration, such as "wauking (fulling) claith on the Sabbath day," "playing at the coppihoall in the kirk door on the Sabbath day," and indulging in numerous other pastimes and "value games." In the time of Welsh one particularly *wicked* person, "Jon Dalrumple, chopman," was summoned before the session "to declare ye caus quhy he hes not satisfied for his odious blasphemie, in taking a piece of flesh, and casting it fra him, said that was ye flesh of Chryst, as himself confessit befoir ye sessioun holdin ye xvi day of Apryle 1604." Ayr had also been, from the earliest times, a garrison town, and of course the resort of a loose and immoral soldiery. Edward I. maintained a strong force in the castle during his dominancy, and Blind Harry has given a graphic picture of the tumultuous state of the streets when Wallace killed the English "churl with his ain staff." Nor was the picture much changed when the ancient castle had given way to the Cromwellian fort in 1652. The saintly soldiers of Old Noll appear, from the session-books of Ayr, to have been in no degree superior in morality. These records mention the fact of an English soldier having been scourged through the streets for adultery. The wide-spread fame of "Maggie Osburn," and her cantrips, may also have tended to deepen the general impression of the peculiar wickedness of the town of Ayr. In still more

recent times (1729) that most industrious and perhaps most indiscriminate of all gleaners, Wodrow, records another circumstance which must have brought the cognomen of *wicked* not only more immediately but more intelligibly before the religious eye of the *douce* community at the commencement of last century. Under the date, June of the above year, he records the circumstance as follows :—

"Things are come to a terrible length among us. This moneth I am well informed that lately in Air toun, wher other sort of meetings were wont to be, there is a meeting of men who deserve little better name than that of atheists. On Sabbath, in time of divine worship, men of some character, Mr. Charles Cochran, James Dalrymple, clerk, and many others, to the number of seven or eight, who, instead of worshipping with other Christians, meet in a tavern and read *Woolston's Discourses on Miracles*, and ridicule all religion. That ordinarily, in contempt, they are seen to dismiss when the congregation dismiss [Forbes Mackenzie was not then in existence], and though Mr. M'Derment knows of it, and Mr. Hunter,* no notice is taken of it; and James Dalrymple, one of them, hath, since it was knowen, got a token to communicat, though even otherwise he is a drunken, loose man."

This is direct and palpable evidence against thee, thou "wicked toun of Ayr." But thou wert merry as well as wicked, for the old rhyme says—

"They're a' born wantin' breeks,
They're a' born bare;
They're a' born wantin' breeks,
The merry lads o' Ayr."

Certainly it was a jolly town in the olden time, and was so but recently, if report speaks truly. As the capital of the county, Ayr has always been the chief seat of the district law courts, and the principal winter residence of the surrounding landed proprietors. It was consequently a place of wealth and gaiety, and might well deserve the distinctive adjective of *merry*. Horse-racing, in defiance of the thunders of the pulpit, was first instituted by the wicked and merry lads of Ayr in 1698, when the magistrates gave a prize of a silver *disk* (quoit), to be run for over the sands on the ninth day of August. Of course balls and all the contingent varieties of mirth attending races would follow then as now.

But the magistrates themselves were jovial fellows. They ate, drank, and spent the funds of the burgh, all for the

* Minister of Ayr.

"honour and glory" of the good town—making stated peregrinations through the most delectable of the taverns. The following is a copy of the account given in to the treasurer on the 10th September, 1726, for what had been consumed in this way during the year :—

"To John Hutchisone of Underwood, vintner in Ayr,	£299	18	6
Rachel M'Dermett, relict of James Houstoun, writer in Ayr, ...	164	16	6
James Greg, Deacon Convener of the Trades,	16	0	0
	£480	15	0 Scots."

Only two years before this, the town was in such a bankrupt state, that the clear income of the burgh only amounted to £469, 1s. 4d., less by £11, 13s. 8d. than the sum spent in supporting "the honour and dignity of the burgh in the public houses."

"A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive,
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for men alive.
Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong,
Sometimes a place for jades and thieves,
And honest men among."

So said the rhyme inscribed on a board in the "Heart of Mid-Lothian"—and no doubt the author (an old English poet, it is said) was right; but "the merry lads o' Ayr" thought differently. So far from being "a house of care," the tolbooth became one of the most uproarious scenes of feasting and mirth. No sooner had a respectable member of the community—town or landward—been incarcerated, than his friends flocked around him, and the jail became a sort of hotel on the most equable principle. To such an extent did the practice attain, that the magistrates, with much apparent reluctance, at length interfered, and, on the 21st December 1695, it was enacted that, "Prisoners within the Tolbuith [be] dischargit from holding any feasting, treat, or banquet within the prison; and that no persons above the number of *one* shall be allowed to dine or sup with any such prisoner.'

Most considerate and worthy dignitaries! The tolerance

of even *one*, to say "here's to ye," showed the truly jovial nature of their constitutions! But even the merry turnkeys were affected with the same benevolence. In 1780, James Brown, one of the officers, was so overwhelmed with "the *milk* of human kindness," on one occasion, that he locked James Campbell, a prisoner for debt, on the outside in place of the in!

The Black Gang.

At the time referred to—early in the present century—there was, as already observed, neither gas-light nor policeman in the burgh. The town was lighted, or rather "darkness made visible," by a few solitary oil-lamps; and the shop windows were *illuminated* after a similar fashion. Though, on the whole, a moral, quiet place—there being only two houses of ill-fame on both sides of the river, and not a "nymph of the pave" to be seen anywhere—yet during the long dark nights of winter, considerable mischief used to be committed by the more reckless of the young, as well as positive injury by the evil-disposed, of whom a numerous sprinkling is to be found in all communities. The consequence was that not a few cases of robbery occurred, and many assaults experienced by the peaceable and unwary inhabitants, who had occasion to move abroad at unseasonable hours.

To counteract this state of matters a number of young men—all, less or more, well connected—bound themselves together, with the view of perambulating the streets during the worst period of the night. They proved to be a formidable band, and certainly no solitary blackguard durst ply his vocation within their reach. Numerous opponents, in counter bands and otherwise, fell before their prowess; but, having cleared the streets of all pests, they, in turn, became troublesome to the inhabitants; and, from their increasing

misdeeds, became known by the sobriquet of "The Black Gang." They were expert in the use of their fists, and all were afraid of them. At length, having gained a rather unenviable notoriety by their pugilistic encounters, not to speak of their drunken orgies—for there was no Forbes Mackenzie Act in these days—the gang broke up, some of the members having left the town, and others betaken themselves to the paths of peace and sobriety. We knew more than one of the celebrated "Black Gang" who latterly sat at the Council Board, and carried on business respectably on their own account.

John Hunter had been one of this band. He was well up in years when we became acquainted with him. He and his wife Kate added to their means of living by keeping one or two young men as lodgers. We happened to be one of them. John himself was a quiet, sober man—rather taciturn than otherwise; but Kate took a ramble occasionally, and not unfrequently have we seen John kindly helping her into bed, to sleep off the effects of her boose. John had been bred a carpenter, but at this time he was mostly employed about the shore, where he was much esteemed. He took charge for many a day of Provost Fullarton's pleasure boat, and usually accompanied him in his frequent excursions to the Lady Isle.

John and his help-mate could boast of but little education between them. They could read, but to write was a difficulty. What money Kate had occasion to lay out for her lodgers, during the week, was carefully knotched down upon the appropriate stick at night. John had a stick for each lodger, one edge of which was devoted to *pence*, the other to *shillings* —and there he sat by the fire-side, with knife in hand, *nicking* away at the dictation of Kate. We thought his mode of book-keeping funny at first, but became reconciled to it when we felt the accuracy of the system, and knew that the accounts of the Exchequer were kept by tallies in a similar manner down to a comparatively recent period.

John had all the appearance of having been a strong, muscular man, about five feet ten, with a chest more deep and round than broad. One day, the late Bailie Dick, then a boy, happened to be strolling up the High Street. He

passed an Irishman, stripped for battle—for Irishmen were brawlers in these days as well as now—and shouting for "ever a Scotchman" to turn out. Little Dick felt annoyed to hear his countrymen browbeat and challenged in this fashion, so he made "speedy heels" towards a close near the "Auld Tower," at the head of which he knew John Hunter had his workshop. He found John busy at his bench, told him what he had seen, and that he wanted him to come and give the Irishman a thrashing. "What like is he?" said John. Dick described the brawler as well as he could. John tucked up his white apron round his waist, and following his informant, proceeded down the close, at the mouth of which they saw the Irishman, shouting, as he went on, for "ever a Scotchman." Turning his eyes to where John stood, he altered his challenge with instinctive cunning—"Ever a Scotchman, *save Jack Hunter!*" By this time John stood forward, and instantly knocked him down, saying, "Ye 'll no be the waur o' that at ony rate!" Leaving him sprawling, John coolly walked up the close, and resumed his plane.

The well-known *Adam Carnie*, of the *Advertiser*, was another of this famous gang. He was an eccentric in some respects, much given to violent swearing, and though often at feud, is known to have possessed a kind heart all the time. He strenuously opposed the gas when first introduced, and continued to burn candle in the shop long after his neighbours were enjoying the better light. Taking umbrage at his banker one day, he withdrew his whole deposit, and going home, threw the bundle of notes into an old chest, saying, with an oath, they might lie there till they rotted—never thinking all the time that he was thus materially promoting the interest of *Hunters & Co.* Adam had a pretty considerable share in the wood-ship, *Magog*, so well known by her numerous trips between Ayr and St. John's. After retiring from the *Advertiser*, the Magog became his hobby. To watch her arrival in the bay, to board her with the pilot, and see her disloaded, as well as to have her equipped again for sea, was his delight. To hear him speak of the ship, one would have thought that he himself had been at St. John's with her, and not the captain.

Another of the "Black Gang" worthies was old M'Ilwraith,

one of the most inoffensive men in the burgh. He was one of those, however, who never get old in the real sense of the word. A keen angler, we have met him wading in the Doon, fishing in company with his grandson, as eagerly as if he too had been a boy! He would be near seventy at this time. Some years afterwards he went out to Canada, as a settler, with some members of his family; and it was remarked that, amongst his "household gods," he had his fowling piece and fishing-rod very carefully packed.

The Radical Movement in 1819.

THE inhabitants of Ayr were good Whigs of the old school, but having little to do with manufactures, they did not appreciate the levelling notions that began to prevail soon after the peace which followed Waterloo. The purposed rising of 1819 found little favour in their eyes; but Ayr being a county town, with barracks capable of accommodating a considerable number of soldiers, the Fourth Veteran Battalion was stationed in it, ready to proceed to any quarter where their services might be required. They were a precious sample of the heroes with whom Wellington had fought his continental battles. One could hardly fancy a set of greater dare-devils. And what floggings the poor fellows were subjected to! They might, in some cases, deserve it, but the punishment inflicted was a disgrace to humanity; and often, at least in the opinion of the people, wantonly indulged in.

On one occasion a soldier was suspected of having abstracted a package of goods from a draper's shop. There was no evidence adduced at the Court-Martial, beyond the fact that he had been in the shop in question, and that the parcel could not be found. He was sentenced to be flogged, and the award of the Court would have been carried into effect on the morrow; but luckily the shopman found the missing parcel, and hastening to the barracks, saved the prisoner from his doom. The soldier of the present day

cannot be too thankful for the happy change which has been brought about in the army.

On the occasion of two soldiers being punished by the lash, the feelings of the on-lookers were so harrowed at the brutality of the affair—one of them being carried off more dead than alive—that they gave rise to some manifestations on the subject, much to the annoyance of the officers. Two of them got over the barrack wall, where the punishment was always inflicted, so as to take a near cut through the green. Mr. James Murdoch, then tacksman of the field, challenged them for trespassing on his property. The officers turned upon him, accusing him of being the cause of the riotous disposition of the crowd, and immediately ordered the company of soldiers on duty to clear the wall, which they did with their bayonets. Mr. Murdoch, however, brought an action against the officers, and obtained damages.

The town, as it had done on many former occasions of public requirement, furnished two or three companies of Volunteers. The Colonel was Hamilton of Rozelle, but they were in reality commanded by Major Dugald Campbell, a Peninsular and Waterloo officer. Not long after they were embodied, they were hurriedly called out one Sabbath night, in consequence of a report that the town was to be attacked, and the banks plundered by a large body of Radicals. The Volunteers paraded the town that and several nights afterwards, but no enemy appeared. The first alarm over, they usually spent the evenings at head-quarters, the Court-House, in card-playing and toddy-drinking. Major Campbell died at his house at Whitletts, and was buried, with military honours, in the church-yard of Ayr, where a head-stone, with an inscription, was erected to his memory.

The Deil's Burial.

No record exists so capable of affording the reader a glimpse of the social condition of Ayr, in the first quarter of the century, as the poem bearing the above title. It was written about forty-four years ago, and created much diversion locally at the time. The author was John Goldie, "the Poetic Seaman," as he is called in "The Contemporaries of Burns," in which it was printed for the first time in 1840. The author was an illegitimate child of John Goldie, shipmaster, better known as *Scant Goudie*, and born in 1788. Brought up with his mother, his education had been much neglected; but he was of a lively, ingenious turn of mind, and acquired knowledge, as it were intuitively. He went to sea and became an expert seaman. After visiting a great many parts of the world, and been present at the taking of Rangoon, in 1824, he was lost in a small craft, which he partly owned, between Ayr and Campbelton, in 1827. There are several blanks in the poem, which, it is to be regretted, we cannot supply.

THE DEIL'S BURIAL.

What dreadfu' news is this they tell,
  Nae doubt ye'll a' hae heard o't?
Rab Goudie* says they've kill'd the Deil,
  And swears to ev'ry word o't.
Ane Robison,† a noted Whig,
  We a' hae heard him brawlin',
Has seized the Gospel gun sae big,
  And left the foe a-sprawlin'
    In the street this day.

Auld Clootie, like a hutch o' coals,
  Lay streekit at his feet,
Gied twa three horrid eldrich squeels,
  Sine lay as deaf 's a peat;

* Letter carrier, a well-known vender of news.
† The Rev. Mr. Robertson, of the anti-burgher meeting-house, Kilmarnock. He was an eccentric individual, though esteemed a great preacher.

When Andrew Hunter,* daun'ring hame,
Just at the time he fell,
Roar'd out—'Od blast your sooty saul,
You'd better been in h——
Than here this day.

The Dysters' Deacon† he cam' up,
An' sair, sair did he greet;
He's ta'en the corpse to his best room,
Till a' the frien's would meet.
Wi' burial letters, sealed in black,
He sent his man, Will, roun';
Himsel' to buy a winding-sheet
To Menzies's‡ ga'ed doun,
Richt vext that day.

Rab heard his tale, and swearing, said,
He ne'er wad use his frien' sae;
Syne bad him just gae back again,
An' buy't frae burgher Lindsay.§
The Deacon left him in a huff,
Telt Lindsay o' his scoffin';
Says he, "Gude faith, ye'll get the claith,
Gif our clerk‖ gets the coffin
To mak this day."

Says the Deacon, "There's my wauket loof,
I winna put it by him:"
He sent his man alang the brig,
That same nicht to employ him:
He bad him mak it just the size
O' muckle Will M'Clymont,¶
And gart him send for painter Waite,**
To paint his age and name on't
In style that day.

When Coachie Boyd had†† heard the news,
He caper'd like a fairy,

* A half-witted person, who bore the cognomen of "Bowsy." He was in the habit of swearing roughly.
† Deacon Parker, a respectable person in his way.
‡ Robert Menzies, draper, New Bridge Street.
§ Also a draper, and a man of much sanctity.
‖ William Anderson, carpenter. He was not unfrequently termed the "Bill Renewer," from his extensive dealings in credit.
¶ William M'Clymont, shoemaker. He was a person of great bulk and stature.
** William F. Waite. He was an excellent tradesman, but very eccentric.
†† So called from his father having been a coach-builder. He was connected with the Ayr Customs, and a person of respectability.

Danced doun to cooper Millikens,*
And telt him a' the story.
The cooper flung his hat roof high,
Syne curst their Whiggish manners;
The very boyne that he had made
He dash'd it a' in flinners,
In rage that day.

Will Duncan,† at the Whitlett's toll,
A holy, sober man,
Whene'er the letter he had read,
Flang doun his spade, an' ran.
A cabbage stock he just had raised,
That weighed nineteen Scots pouns,
Was sent in to the cross of Ayr,
An' selt for bread an' buns
To eat that day.

When auld Bankhead‡ got word that they
Had put the coffin by him,
He caper'd, danc'd, an' sigh'd, an' pray'd,
An' maist fell to the crying'.
He vow'd he ne'er wad touch the corpse,
He was sae sair affrontit;
The very wood he had prepar'd,
Flung in the fire, and brunt it,
In wrath that day.

John Adams next and T——§
Cam frae the far Tounhead,
The tears were drappin' doun their cheeks
Like ony amber bead.
John Gibb‖ and honest saddler Brown
Were set for twa door-keepers;
An' they let Adam Carnie¶ in,
For he had on his weepers,
Richt white that day.

* The cooper was a hard-drinking, merry fellow. His cooperage, situated on the quay, was a general *howf* for seamen, most of whom were fond of spinning a yarn with cooper Milliken.

† A well-known gardener.

‡ Bankhead was a zealous anti-burgher. He nevertheless courted his second wife before the first was dead. On one occasion he was caught by the minister in a *tete-a-tete* with his intended, when he excused himself by saying that he was "just clearing up some dark points to the bit thing."

§ Both plaiding manufacturers.

‖ Tailor.

¶ Long connected with the "Ayr Advertiser."

Park an' M'Kinlay* next cam up,
Wi' twa three Newton weavers;
The Deacon rose, an' kick'd them out,
An' ca'd them unbelievers.
Park flew into a dreadfu' rage,
An' said he firmly hop'd
To see his pats, his yarns, an' vats,
Ta'en to the Cross an' roup'd,
Some market day.

James Miller† cam alang the brig,
And Ramsay‡ by his side;
James swore he hadna been sae vext
Since the day he lost his bride.
* * * * *

[This hiatus we cannot now supply, but the names introduced were—The Rev. William Schaw, Old Light Burgher minister; William M'Whirter, grocer, Kilmarnock Street; James Kirkwood, shoe-maker; "Bowsy," William Smith, very pompous; Rodman, a respectable merchant at one time, but became unfortunate by a second marriage. He wandered from town to town, both in England and Scotland, always maintaining the appearance of a person in better circumstances. M'Croskie, at one time harbour-master: he was very ill-tempered; John Brown; M'Creath, boot and shoe maker; Gregg, do.; Forsyth, bookseller, an eccentric character; Bailie Ewing, hardware merchant; John Hunter, do.; M'Kean; Smith; Henry Cowan, better known as "Whisky Henry."]

Will Anderson now cross'd the brig,
Wi' his man, Robin Neil;
An' naething for the kist wad tak,
Since it was for the Deil.
Lang Skipper Jock§ cam up the gaet,
Wi' the mortcloth in a pock;
He gat it frae the *Butchers' Club*,‖
For brawly they kenn'd Jock
Was vext that day.

* Both weavers' agents.
† Coachman. The bands of marriage were proclaimed, but the bride was not forthcoming on the night of marriage.
‡ A brewer—a jolly, witty sort of person.
§ The author's own father.
‖ Captian Goldie was not originally brought up to the sea, having been a butcher in early life—a business to which he owed the cognomen of *Scant*,

Frank Nicol, Hawthorn, Barber Lees,*
Cam stauchrin' up frae Mallie's,
In blacken'd weeds, as drunk's ye please,
For they were hired for saulies.
M'Hutcheon's† baker boys cam next,
Wi' basketfuls o' bakes;
An' twa o' Deacon Dickie's men
Brocht up the stools and spakes,
Richt black that day.

The hour was now approaching fast,
An' mony an idle servant
Was gatherin' roun' about the doors,
To see the Deil's interment.
The *friens*‡ they a' cam flockin' in,
As fast as Willie bade them;
They were obliged to steek the doors,
The house wad hardly haud them,
'Twas sae cramm'd that day.

Then cam Black Jock an' Johnnie Baird,
Doun frae the far Mill Vennel;
Pate Paterson§ to say the grace,
Wi' drucken Johnnie Donal;

much more familiar to him than his Christian name. It arose from "Scant o' creesh,"—an expression invariably used by him when examining cattle, to denote their inferiority of condition. "Scant Goudie" hence became an appellative which ever afterwards adhered to him. Nor was this applied so much in derision, as from a spirit of familiarity, common to most small towns, but nowhere more prevalent in former times, and even still, than among the worthy denizens of Ayr, few of the inhabitants, however wealthy and high, being without some distinguishing *sobriquet*. Captain Goldie was a man of respectability in his sphere, though perhaps somewhat undervalued as a seaman by those who considered themselves "thorough bred" sons of Neptune. Illustrative, we suppose, of his indifferent seamanship, it is told that one blowy night, with a heavy *fresh* in the river, his vessel broke from her moorings, and was carried fairly out of the harbour. Having "brought her to" behind the south wall, he caused the bower anchor to be unshipped, exclaiming, as he heard it plunge into the tide, "There —snuff at that, you old b——h!' Unfortunately, however, no cable was attached; and long ere morning the ship was driven on shore, sustaining considerable damage.

* Bungo Lees, as he was called, was a well-known knight of the strop.

† Mr. M'Hutcheon, baker, latterly styled of Fisherton.

‡ It is the practice to invite the *friends* or relations, and those connected with the deceased, to partake of a refreshment prior to moving the body.

§ Peter Paterson, tanner, a member of the Anti-burgher Congregation. He was a keen curler, and a good hand at draughts. It is told that he once took horse to Glasgow, to contest a game with a celebrated player there, and was worsted after a protracted trial. When on his way home, pondering over his defeat, it occurred to him that he had discovered the error which had led to the catastrophe; and though then in the middle of the Mearns Moor, about twelve miles distant, and near midnight, he wheeled about his

His wife cam stampin' after him,
Like ony Maggie Howe;*
An' cursed him to come out frae 'mang
Sic an unholy crew
As them that day.

* * * * *

[Here another hiatus occurs, which we cannot supply; but the characters referred to were—Thomas Gray, grocer; James Rodger, flesher. He was an eccentric, and never could believe that the earth went round the sun. "Nonsense, Kerr,"† he would say, "on our feet the ae day, and on our head the ither." John M'Lure, tobacconist. He was a worthy, religious person. He and some others were returning from a preaching at Ochiltree, when they were assaulted by a party of men and women. He was so much hurt that he died immediately. Two colliers, named Anderson and Glen, were executed for their share in the murder. Andrew Gemmel, merchant—said to have been the heir of "Edie Ochiltree;" Thomas Ross, tinsmith; David Auld, perfumer—latterly of Doonbrae; John Guthrie, tobacconist; William M'Laren, gardener and seedsman; Bauldy Tremble, deacon of the coopers—a strange person, much addicted to swearing; Archibald Sword, another curious character. He was a cork-cutter, and best known by his *sobriquet* of "Corkie Sword." Thomas King, wright and undertaker—best known as "Tam King;" Samuel Heron, long known as a druggist. It used to be a saying that, if such a thing "did ye nae ill, it would do ye nae guid, like Samuel Heron's pills." William Murdoch, chandler — better known as *Buonaparte*, from his likeness to the Emperor Napoleon I.; Murdoch, or the "stout barber," so called from his corpulence.]

Wee grocer Gibb‡ neist waddles up,
Like some fat goosy-gander,
Taks aff his hat, and in the pass
Fa's owre young Alexander.§

horse, returned to Glasgow, and had the satisfaction of carrying away the palm of victory. He lived to a great age, and was much respected.

* The heroine of Wilson's poem of "Watty and Meg."

† A saddler, usually called "Coup Kerr," from his singing the song of "Johnnie Coup."

‡ He was little short of twenty stone weight.

§ Robert Alexander, junior, dyer—the man of "prospects."

The wean roar'd out, till at the Cross
Ye micht hae heard the screech o't;
Wha think ye cam to its relief,
But slater Hughie Highet,*
Richt fou that day.

The merchants a', baith up an' doun,
Were fast their windows steekin',
An' pushing up to see the fun,
In crowds a' het and reekin'.
E'en hardware David† barr'd his door,
To show that he was civil;
Put on his new-soled shoon, and sent
The profits to the Devil,
For him that day,

An' skelpin' up like some race-horse,
Few there were rinnin' harder,
Fa's in at Gilbert Hazel's door,
Wi' Jamie Sprent,‡ the barber.
Says Sprent, "lad, ye may cock your nose,
An' swagger hame rejoicin';
But, by my faith, before we part,
I'll gar ye wat my wizen,
Wi' a gill this day."

Said David, "whisky's unco dear,
An' siller's grown sae *scant* now;
Besides, I ne'er did Clootie fear,
I'm turned owre great a *saunt* now.§
I dinna drink till beastly fou,
Gang hame an' clout the wife aye;
Nane can deny but that I've walk'd
Quite *single-eyed*‖ through life aye,
Baith nicht an' day.

* Hugh Highet, slater, commonly termed "the Binder." He got his knee hurt on the ice, which caused his death. He was the keenest and best ice and quoit player in the country.

† David Logan, well-known as a dealer in hardware of all kinds. Money-making was his hobby, and once in his possession, he knew how to keep it. Many anecdotes are told of his dealings, especially with the Arran men, during the summer fair. A Highlandman called to purchase an old gun from him, but discovered that the barrel had a twist. "O," said David, "it is meant to shoot round corners."

‡ James was much given to drink, being often "fou for weeks thegither." His wife, who was an industrious woman, and felt affronted at his conduct, resolved on attempting at least a temporary cure on one occasion, by applying blisters to his feet while asleep, which had the effect of confining him to the house for several weeks.

§ David was anything but religious.

‖ He was blind of an eye.

The crowds were dancin' roun' the door,
Mad wi' sic thochts o' freedom;
An' ilka ane that popped in,
A hearty cheer they gied him.
Claith Jamie* now sends Andrew Lees
To fetch a guard o' sodgers;
Or else John Sillars,† wi' his pike,
To keep the crowd in order
An' peace that day.

But they catch'd Robin Hamilton,‡
Gaun up to see the spree,
An' gart him stan' an' sing a verse
O' "Oswald's Cavalrie."
Rab roar'd the weel kent ditty up,
He was in sic a hurry;
But nobler game soon hove in sight,
For up cam Archie Murray,§
Maist fou that day.

* * * * * *

The Deacon's house was cramm'd sae fou,
Yet crowds were up still flockin,'
Till muckle Gibb was almost smoor'd,
And Johnnie Boyd was chokin.'
Then Will Dunlop ran down the stairs,
Changed berths wi' Gibb the tailor,
An' clash'd the door richt in the face
O' Willie Paul, the jailer,
Wi' a daud that day.

Pate Paterson now rises up,
Some mournfu' tale to tell,

* James Murdoch, clothier.

† One of the town-officers and criers. John was rather a curious character. When half-seas over, his memory was exceedingly treacherous, and the wags of Ayr used to take undue advantage of his weakness. Like Paddy Weeks, who had so often sung the "Boys of Kilkenny" that he forgot it, John had frequently to apply to the bystanders to ascertain what he had been intimating; and in this way he was repeatedly led into the most ridiculous blunders. As an instance, when, in the course of his rounds one night, announcing "excellent hot mutton pies," at a certain bakery, he forgot the latter part of his advertisement, and had recourse to his usual prompters—"Eh, callans, what was I saying?" "Hot mutton pies, John," answered one of the audience, "*new hailed at the water o' Doon foot;*" and so John went on amidst the laughter of all who heard him, quite unconscious of the slightest inaccuracy.

‡ Of Daft Rab Hamilton some account is given elsewhere.

§ Archibald Murray, another half-wit; more outrageous then Rab, and easily irritated.

Put on an elwand-face, an' said
A grace as lang's himsel'.
An' clean caup out was now the toast
O' ilka drink that comes;
An' mony a deadly gash was made
In Willie Duncan's buns,
Wi' their teeth that day.

Now a' the nabs, in sable weeds,
Are to the maut cross dashin,'
To walk in state an' meet the corpse,
Behint their frien' Hugh Wason.*
Ilk vessel's flags, at half-mast head,
The mournfu' tidings tell;
An' Mysie Duck† is sent wi' speed
To ring the double bell,
In haste that day.

[Here the Poet enumerates most of the officials and other chief men of the burgh, among whom were provost Dunlop, Sheriff Aiton, Robert Robertson, Writer, and Dr Bone, a very eccentric person—he had been long on board a man-of-war; Patrick Hume, merchant and ship-owner; John Aitken, shoemaker; John Bell; Charles Shaw; John Kirkwood, shoemaker; Rev. Messrs Auld and Cuthill, of the old and new churches; William Cowan, of Hunters and Co. bankers, afterwards Provost; Alexander Murdoch, procurator-fiscal; Provost Campbell; Dr. Whiteside;‡ Dr. Paterson, a celebrated physician, afterwards of London—he had a daughter equally famous for her beauty; James Telfer, wood merchant; Robert M'Whinnie, watch-maker; James Murdoch, writer and messenger, better known by the *sobriquet* of "Crunch." He was a great pedestrian. When in Edinburgh on one occasion, he followed the crowd to the castle esplanade to see an eclipse, which had been duly heralded. When questioned about it on his return to Ayr, he said, "It was a total failure!"]

* Town-officer.

† Marion Duck, the bell-ringer.

‡ The Doctor was a fine specimen of the professional gentlemen of the beginning of the century. When cholera first visited Ayr in 1832, the wealthier inhabitants fled in crowds to the higher and more remote parts of the county. When consulted on the subject by one of his friends, the Doctor, with some warmth replied—"O, certainly; by all means go to Straiton, God Almighty kens naething about Straiton!"

They now begin like volunteers,
To range themselves in order;
The magistrates were in the midst,
The writers on the border.
When Ebie Shaw,* a frugal soul,
For ever bent on hainin',
Ran hame to change his hat an' coat,
In case it micht be rainin'
Or snaw that day.

The officers took aff their hats,
An' show'd their heads weel pouther'd;
An,' like the sergeant o' the corps,
Their crape an' halbert shouther'd.
John Sillars, wha gat bleezin' fou,
Began to reel an' stutter,
Gied Willie Kerr † a dreadfu' drive,
An' laid him in the gutter,
Wi' a clash that day.

Then Banker Will roar'd out to get
Twa constables wi' batons,
Wha march'd John up the nineteen steps,‡
To bide amang the rattons.
John swore drink hadna cross'd his craig,
Mair than the bairn's unborn;
An' aye 's he stagger'd up the stair,
He cursed wee shoon and corns
For that, that day.

The nabs moved on an' met the corpse;
On reaching Hunter's Bank,
They wheel'd about in marchin' style,
To join the mournfu' rank.
The mob seemed quite delighted,
They thocht it famous sport,
An' gied three hearty cheers as they
Turned up the Auld Kirk Port,
In shouts that day.

They reach'd the grave in solemn pace
An' gathered roun' the coffin
Were mony a saint with tearfu' e'e,
Though, faith, their hearts were laughin.'

* Ebenezer Shaw, town treasurer. He was a wealthy merchant, but very penurious. It is related of him that he carried his new silk umbrella under his great-coat, to keep it from the rain.
† Also a town-officer, and very small of stature.
‡ The old jail, described elsewhere.

Then John M'Doul,* with cautious han',
The coffin did uncover;
It split! an' Clootie jumped out,
Just like a flash o' pouther,
In flames that day!

Then ilka ane wi' mettle heels
Was doun the Kirk Port skelpin,'
Some lost their hats an' shoon, an' some
Wi' broken heels were yelpin';
When John M'Doul had gather'd a'
His spades and shools thegither,
Cam' hin'most doun the Port, and said,
"The grave will do anither—
Some ither day."

"The Ayr of Ayr."

SUCH was the name of a fast-sailing clipper-built vessel, the first of the kind that had ever belonged to the port. It had been a nobleman's yacht, and was intended to ply between Ayr and Glasgow, the old packet boat, of which "Skipper Paton" was long master, being too slow for the advancing notions of the times. "The Ayr of Ayr" belonged to a company—chiefly merchants—who intended to confer a benefit *first*, upon themselves, and *secondly*, upon the community, by a cheaper and more expeditious conveyance of goods to and from the *Emporium of the West*. The ship was looked upon with great favour by the inhabitants, and her trial trip—to Campbelton—was witnessed by an immense crowd, who lined both sides of the harbour. This occurred in June 1822.

The late John Brown, writer in Ayr, was a man of acknowledged talent. He had a playful fancy, and one of the readiest pens. He was connected with the *Ayr Courier*, and its successor, the *Ayr Observer*, taking a considerable share, for some time, in the literary management of both journals. He occasionally indulged in verses, and not a few of his poetical effusions found their way into private circles.

* John M'Dowell, the grave digger.

No man, at the same time, could be more free from the conceit of authorship. He wrote for pleasure, not for the gratification of literary ambition. By accident we happen to be in possession of one or two of his pieces, amongst which is one entitled an "Epistle to a Friend," giving a description of the pleasure trip to Campbelton. The epistle appeared in the columns of the *Courier*, and created much amusement at the time, It is not out of place as a sort of addenda to "The Deil's Burial."

EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

Dear Sir, ye ken I lately coft
The good sloop "Ayr of Ayr;"
A gallant bark, and fit for sea,
In weather foul or fair.

Oft has she borne a Noble Duke,
And Lords and Knights beside;
Frae merry England's verdant coast,
Far up the Frith o' Clyde.

But time and chance our fortunes turn,
'Tis even so wi' ships;
In place o' Lords and Ladies now,
The Ayr maun sail wi' cits.

Just t'ither day, wi' twenty such,
She spread her willing sail;
And bore away to Campbelton,
Wi' less than half a gale.

But sic a crew! the Lord forfend
I ere should meet again;
They ate and drank, and sang and swore,
Withouten fear or shame.

Some gat importance frae their purse,
Some plum'd upo' their rank,
Some mended pots and candlesticks,
Some "struttit in a bank."

To tell their names a' ane by ane,
I canna spare ye time;
Besides 'twad be a shamefu' waste
O' my sma' stock o' rhyme.

Some gat their bread by sellin' yill,
Some drive or haud the plew,
Some live by braid-claith and the shears,
Some by the boot and shoe.

Some gather'd taxes for the king,
Sae greedy and sae gleg;
A marker o' the Custom-dues
In daffin brak his leg.

Some never occupation had,
Yet bummingly * thro' life
They go, and mind its rubs no more
Than "Billy Fairy's wife." †

Some writer chiels wha never heard
O' sic a thing as sin,
Had nearly sunk my bonnie bark
Wi' devilry and din.

Ane o' the squad his father curs'd;
He curs'd his ain papa!
A generation far'er back,
He d——d them ane an' a'!

An Elder o' the holy kirk
Sae pious and sae meek,
When tir'd o' wine and wickedness,
Retir'd a while to sleep.

A noisy wag swore he was dead,
And argu'd lang the case;
He gravely undertook, I vow,
To prove it to his face.

A son of Esculapius spruce,
Wi' pouches fu' o' salts;
A waistcoat o' the Dublin stripe,
A flute to play a waltz.

Ane clamb the riggin and the mast,
Syne tried how he could swim,
Wi' boots and big coat, hat and stick,
He gallantly plunged in.

Some roar'd and sang, while others spu'd,
And some lay fast asleep;
'Twas plainly temptin' Providence,
To venture on the deep.

* This refers to a good-natured visionary called "Bummer Cowan." He was the son of "Whisky Henry,' and had ample means. A story is told to the effect, that Henry and his better-half had some slight disagreeance on one occasion, "I am the queen bee," she said, "that made the honey." "Ay, ay," rejoined Henry, "but I'm the head *bummer*."

† *Billy Fairy* was a Porter in Ayr, of some notoriety.

If ere the Ayr should be a wreck;
If ere she chance to foun'er;
I'll blame the deeds o' this sad trip;
Your servant, Sir—The OWNER.

It was soon found, however, that even the "Ayr of Ayr" could not compete with steam, and she was disposed of to be replaced by a steam packet, sailing between Ayr and Glasgow twice a-week. She bore the same name, and was considered a crack vessel at the time. She had not been long on the station, however, when one dark night, in going down the Clyde, she encountered the "Comet" steamer off Kempoch, at Gourock, and ran her down. Thinking that his own vessel was sinking, the captain first made for the shore, and before he could return to the aid of the "Comet," sixty persons had found a watery grave. Had the *Comet*, it is said, displayed her lights, and taken the usual precautions, the accident would not have occurred, and the captain of the *Ayr of Ayr* was blamed for hurrying so quickly from the scene of disaster; but no doubt, in the confusion of the moment, he did what he thought best to save his own vessel from going down in deep water. He felt it necessary, however, to go abroad, and the "Ayr of Ayr" was soon afterwards sold.

The "Telegraph"—General Brown.

LOCOMOTION was not much in fashion. Parties belonging to the town who had been at London were considered to have *travelled*, and seen something of the world. A respectable individual who walked to the "overgrown place," his purse being light perhaps, was, on his return, dubbed "Lunnun John," which *sobriquet* stuck to him through life. The society of those who had resided some time in Edinburgh and Glasgow was courted at tea parties; and the medical and law students in particular, proud of having been at the seats of learning, used to entertain young ladies by describing what they had seen in these cities,—the big wigs, castle, fine streets, squares, monuments, the college, &c. The Medi-

cals, with grave countenance, sometimes gave a hint that they could, if they dared, reveal something awful, but which, in their opinion, was absolutely necessary for public health and the progress of science. It was generally understood that they meant the doings of the Resurrectionists, well known, as supposed, to some of them, and the galvanizing of the last murderer in the dissecting room. How the juveniles, too, used to stare when told by their papas that they had seen the Lion on Arthur's Seat, Scotland's Crown at Edinburgh, and King William's Statue at the Cross of Glasgow.

But the "Railway" has changed this system of things, and may be said to have revolutionized society. What a saving of time and money; and who can estimate the moral benefits which have proceeded from the wheels of the fire chariot? All have shared in the advantages, and perhaps commercial travellers and farmers, who used regularly to visit market towns, as much as any other. The former were the chief patrons of the inns and coaches—fine fellows all, with plenty of money, and by no means in a hurry like the modern scarecrows of steam. A jolly Englishman would have thought nothing of postponing his journey, to the great contentment of Mrs. Simpson of the Black Bull, till he ate up, dinner after dinner, her whole litter of ten pigs; and this, as Sam Slick would say, is a fact. Farmers too (only distant an hour's drive by Railway) would sometimes spend a day on the road, corning their horse, and watering themselves with inn-keepers and toll-keepers; and, if the naig required a "shoe on," with the smith as well. Arrived in town a jovial nicht would be spent wi' an "auld acquaintance" in honest Mrs. Brown's at the Fauld Backs, the next day at the fair, (where every transaction generally began or ended with a gill), and the evening would certainly see some of them about the "wee short hour ayont the twal" careering home like Tam O' Shanter to meet their dames, who had been 'nursing their wrath to keep it warm.' Now, both classes, as the Americans say, go ahead—the traveller makes running calls, takes a chop at a dining-room, and bolts off with an express train; the farmer procures a return-ticket, buys or sells off-hand, without a gill, and returns to his family in his right mind, perhaps with any cattle he has purchased, in the same train.

But it were idle to attempt to describe the benefits which a single class has received in a social, economical, or moral point of view.

Several towns of note could not even boast of a public conveyance, but Ayr had its "Telegraph," one of the old four-in-hand stage coaches to Glasgow; and, amidst the general dulness, one of our favourite amusements, apart from school, which by the way we considered no amusement at all, consisted in attending with all possible regularity its departure and arrival. Passengers could not walk quietly to a station, procure a ticket, and, amid the bustle, take a seat in a carriage, scarcely observed. When a person had made up his mind to go per Telegraph, the first thing was to get himself booked for a certain day, because, had he not used this precaution, he might have found, when he came to the coach, that all the seats had been previously engaged. For this purpose a servant or messenger had frequently to be sent to the hotel from which the coach started, and the common inquiry was whether "a' the ootsides were taen," or "a' the insides taen oot;" and, according to the answer, a seat was secured as required. A few knowing ones would quietly walk to the head of the Newton, and take their chance of a vacancy; but booking was the general custom.

Many articles of consumpt were dear, and taxation heavy, (only think of 7d. postage for a letter between Glasgow and Ayr), and accordingly it was customary for parties to acquaint their friends that they intended to go to Glasgow or Edinburgh, and would be glad to take letters or small parcels. The proposed journey not only came to be thus known, but it got wings at the "Sandgate Well." The town was supplied with water only from public and private wells, and there was a great traffic at the Sandgate Well. What a nice job for the servants to go to the well! Nay, it was said, that some servants would not accept of a situation unless they were engaged, among other duties, as the lass that "was tae gang for the water." The Sandgate Well, in short, was a kind of rendezvous for lads to meet their sweethearts; and where the domestic affairs of families were discussed, while the servants were waiting in turn to get their *stoups* filled. The circumstance, therefore, of any party of note about to

go by the Telegraph soon became generally known, and sometimes the particular business on which they were to be engaged, and when they were expected to return.

Those who had been at Glasgow or Edinburgh generally returned with something new, such as an addition to or change in their dress, and all was duly noted and commented on. A dashing jeweller, bearing a patriotic name, who went to Edinburgh occasionally to replenish his *plate*, once took advantage of his trip to get his hair dressed in Princes Street. Such an occurrence could not escape notice, and the news soon spread, after the first tea and card party the jeweller attended. Accordingly, whenever he was seen leaving by the Telegraph, the remark was current that Jeweller Wallace had gone to Edinburgh to get his hair cut.

One of the drivers of the coach was John Curle, who used to say that he had spent a "nicht wi' Burns," at a club in Torbolton. John had a thorough contempt for "new fangled notions." He never could understand the Newtonian theory of the earth going round the sun. "How can that be," he used to say, "for I ha'e driven the coach for thirty years between Ayr and Kilmarnock, and the half-way house* aye stan's where it used to do!" He was at the same time an excellent specimen of his profession; and there was something of interest in his rubicund face, and that of his jocular and ancient comrade, Samuel Tam the guard.

Sol himself did not more punctually fulfil his mission than did these two worthies; and many a time it puzzled us how the human machine could be wound up to such regularity. And then the ever-changing nature of the biped load whom they daily rolled backward and forward between Ayr and "the great commercial emporium of the west," presented a rich opportunity for the study of character; and there was music in the words of old Tam—"All ready John," as he sprang up to his seat behind, giving a tout or two upon his long white-iron horn, as well as in the "Go on, horses," and the flourish of the whip upon the part

* Near to Symington, about six miles from Kilmarnock, where John and Samuel used to sup a small bowl of porridge and milk at eight A.M., previous to breakfasting in Kilmarnock at nine.

of the obedient John; and the sound of the horses' feet on the causeway, as they rounded the corner at the Malt Cross, and passed majestically along the New Bridge, and were soon lost to the sight. Nor was the arrival of the *Telegraph* nightly from that mighty city, of which we had heard so much, but never seen, of less consequence. The crowd of idlers was generally much greater than in the morning—some welcoming the arrival of friends, others, like ourselves, staring at the new-comers with a curiosity which, perhaps, could not be accounted for otherwise than by the logic of old Nabob Limond, when puzzled for a reason—"Hoo! just because just!" There was a pleasure in the manner in which the long whip of the driver was laid aside, and the reins flung loosely over the harness, satisfied that the work of the day was about a close; and in the whisk of the tails of the tired horses, as unyoked, they thought of refreshing water, comfortable stalls, and abundance of corn and hay! And then, what a bustle Samuel was in, with his rosy face still more freshly blown, as, aided by his assistant porters, he handed down the luggage, and bowed so politely to the ladies, or thanked the gentlemen, with a touch of his broad brim. Finally, the coach stripped of all its furnishings, and the duties of the day over, there was delight in their retiring to the Queen's Head, to meet their joint friends, and enjoy the accustomed allowance of "brandy and water" before retiring, as the stereotyped phrase of the local paragraph writer has it, "to their several places of abode."

One autumn evening, as we stood opposite the Black Bull, waiting, among numerous other idlers, the arrival of the coach, a loud hurrah was raised and prolonged as the Telegraph wheeled round from the New Street, "General Brown has come to town!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried all the big and little boys, amidst the waving of hats and bonnets. We had never heard of General Brown before, although it was obvious he was no stranger to the good town of Ayr. The coach was more than usually crowded, and dust all over. Seated behind the driver we observed the cocked hat, feather, scarlet coat and epaulettes, of the party saluted. As he came down slowly, and with much majesty, Samuel paid great apparent defer-

ence to his charge—"Take care, General, take care!" On terra firma, the General, to our young fancy, presented an extraordinary and rather incomprehensible appearance. He did not stand above five feet one, but was remarkably broad and strong—a perfect Samson in muscular power. His military coat, of the finest quality, but somewhat stained, flowed well down to his heels, and his body was begirt with the sword belts and trappings of a cavalry officer. On his breast he had various ornaments and medals, and from his hat streamed a brilliant assortment of ribbons; but his face struck us with an indescribable feeling of awe and wonder. We had recently been reading the adventures of Baron Munchausen, one of the old cheap editions, with a wood-cut of the hero in grim outline, having a black patch on his disjointed nose. Not a few of our elderly readers may, perhaps, recollect the *genuine* portrait we allude to. What! thought we, this must be the veritable Baron himself—the same features; the only difference being that the one was a picture, this *is* a reality! There he stood, with his brown, weather-beaten, iron face, fierce grey eyes, shaggy eye-brows, massive nose, knocked aside as if by an accident, and never properly replaced; his mouth, lips, and ponderous under jaws opening and shutting with a heavy, determined motion—in good keeping with the squinting ogle of his piercing gaze. His right hand leant upon a strong stick, for his left leg was some half-inch shorter than his right.

We were puzzled to think who this great man could be. We had heard of Wellington, Moore, Graham, Hope, Napoleon, and others, but never of General Brown. And he must have seen good service, too: that broken nose has been occasioned by the cut of a sabre, and that halt in his walk is the result of a spent cannon ball! Altogether, we felt an inexpressible interest in the extraordinary warlike character before us, the centre, as he was, of a crowd of onlookers. Like most Scots boys, we were deeply read in Wallace and Bruce, and regarded all who wore a sword as the embodiment of chivalry. Our fancy took wild flights, as it rapidly ran over in imagination the various passages of the hero's history.

"Guard!" cried the General, in an authoritative voice, "hand out my luggage."

"Yes, General, immediately," was the ready and obsequious reply.

Down came the General's luggage, lot after lot; and if we were astonished before, we were still more surprised now. First came a large bag or wallet, which could be slung over the shoulder, if necessary; next a flag or ensign, rolled upon a spear-like pole; then a white-iron horn, as long as that of the guard, and longer. In our simplicity we wondered what use a general could have for such paraphernalia.

"Now, guard, my despatches!"

"Here they are, General," said the ready Samuel, handing a bright, round, and rather large tin case to the mysterious man in uniform. "Despatches," thought we, "truly he must be a great personage!"

"Here, guard," said the General, "here is something for you," slipping a coin or two, apparently, into the hand of Samuel, who bowed his acknowledgments.

"Now," added the General, with manifest complacency, "tell the waiter I want to be shown to my apartments!"

"Yes, General," cried the waiter of the Bull, who was quite at hand, "come this way, they are all ready—*in the stable!*" which latter words he added in an under tone, and the meaning of which we did not understand at the time. The General then marched into the Bull, where the landlord was ready to receive him; and the crowd, giving three cheers, dispersed, as they would do upon witnessing the safe arrival and up-putting of any other great personage.

We went home without finding any one who could give us an intelligent account of General Brown, and we fell asleep dreaming of battles, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, and Wallace, and many other heroes. Next morning we witnessed the departure of the Telegraph, as usual, had breakfast afterwards, and were on our way from Newton Green to the school, when we heard the bells ringing, and saw a crowd passing, as it were in procession, along the new bridge. This was about nine o'clock. We hastened our steps, and found that the Lord Justice-Clerk and another of the Judges, with the Magistrates and Councillors, were making a formal

and imposing entry into the town to open the Justiciary Court. At the head of this procession were the staff of the militia, a small body of men in uniform, and, to our astonishment, who should be marching in front but General Brown, with all the grim pomp and circumstance of the previous evening! He was carrying the standard, still furled, over his shoulder, and his air was extremely military, the only mar to it being the shortness of his left leg, the defect of which he endeavoured to conceal as well as the weight of his body enabled him, by imposing an extra share of duty upon the other.

We thought it very strange that a General should condescend to act as captain of the Ayrshire Militia staff; but such was the fact, and our knowledge of military duty or etiquette was too limited to reason ourselves into or out of any belief on the subject. The Judges having been duly escorted to the Court House, the General and the staff returned, in the order they had gone, to the Malt Cross, where they presented arms to him, and were dismissed.

There could be no dubiety about all this. Perhaps the General, we thought, had come upon a special mission to attend the opening of the Justiciary Circuit—more especially as it might be considered an important one, two notable disturbers of the peace—Anderson and Glen—being to be tried for a Sabbath-day murder; and they were tried, condemned, and executed—both swinging upon the same tree. But we hurried to school—our lateness and abstraction as to the General subjecting us to what we conceived a rather unmerited severity of punishment.

Returning in the afternoon by the Sandgate, somewhat moppishly and late from the academy, having been "kept in" for our morning's default, we were interrupted by a vast crowd, chiefly boys and grown-up lads, extending from the mouth of the *Courier* (now the *Observer*) office close, up the High Street. Ever and anon they shouted, hurrahed, and shouted again, those nearest the close always keeping a vigilant look-out, as if danger lurked there. At length the crowd broke and fled in all directions; and, to our utter amazement, out rushed the General, flourishing his stick and shouting with stentorian lungs—"Charge! charge!" On

he ran after the flying enemy with all the velocity his ponderous body, game leg, and a drop too much, permitted. He was evidently drunk, and so begrimed with snuff, that "his best friends," as the saying is, "would hardly have known him."

Two canny town officers, with scarlet coats, constituted all the force that was deemed necessary to keep the peace. So the fun, for it seemed greatly to amuse the inhabitants, was allowed to go on. Confounded at what we saw, but engrossed with the spectacle, we hovered on as a spectator. As charge after charge became expended, and the routed enemy were nowhere, the General, pouring with perspiration, and chuckling over the dispersed foe, invariably returned to his stronghold in the *Courier* office close, the coward crowd as invariably gathering in from all quarters in the rear, and again besieging him with renewed bravados. This species of warfare continued for some time, but it was evident that the General was getting gradually more uproarious, and less steady upon his legs. The last grand sally at length took place. On he came with increased energy, but evidently wild and unsteady, and his war cry had merged into a thirsty croak. "On, Stanley! on!" however, was still his motto, the enemy flying before him. In the midst of the charge, one unlucky participant, presuming, perhaps, upon the General's declining powers, at all events, not getting out of the way quick enough, was brought to the ground with one fell swoop of his trusty oak. At the same time, tripping upon the prostrate body of his foe, the impetuous General came down, head foremost, with such force upon the causey, that a shudder crept all over the spectators, every one thinking he was killed. There he lay motionless, at some little distance in advance of his opponent, till the sympathetic crowd gathering round, both were borne away, the youth to his home, and the General to *his apartments* at the Black Bull. Happily neither of them had sustained material injury, and after the General had slept off his potations, he was next day enabled to resume his route, which we understood was to Dublin, to inspect the garrison there.

The mystery that had hung over our boyish fancy, like a nightmare, now stood revealed. The General was an ec-

centric, nay, more, *a maniac!* labouring under the delusion that he belonged to the army. Had he lived now he would have been confined in some of the many asylums for the insane, at Musselburgh or elsewhere. We never could learn precisely where he came from. Some said he belonged to Haddingtonshire. He had no doubt been an idiot from infancy, his insanity taking a military turn, and always attaching himself in his younger years to some regiment or other, though aspiring no higher than a soldier of the ranks. As years passed on his ambition increased, and he claimed, as we have seen, the position of a General. Nor were there wanting military gentlemen who amused themselves with his weakness; and contributing their cast-off suits, equipped him in a style of highly gratifying grandeur.

Edinburgh he of course considered the military head-quarters of Scotland, and from thence all his movements were directed. What he called his dispatches were a number of very finely executed documents, purporting to be commissions, authorising his proceedings, signed, by the reigning monarch, George IV., or the Commander-in-chief, as the case required. And the owners of all stage-coaches and steam-boats, and all post-masters, were enjoined to carry the General free, as he was on Government business. Hence his arrival by the Telegraph, and his reception at Ayr, as described. Most of the proprietors, guards, and coachmen, entered heartily into the joke, and humoured the General, who was well respected, in so far as a person in his unhappy circumstances could be respected. He was by no means a furious maniac, unless excited by ill-treatment. On the other hand he entertained rather extravagant notions of dignity, politeness, and chivalry. To shine as a knight-errant seemed to be part of his delusion. To aid those in distress, with money, if he had any coppers, or to defend them, if assailed by superior force, was to him the utmost glory; and as we have said, he was powerful as a giant, no ordinary man could have grappled with him for a moment. The long horn which he carried by his side, when on foot, was to announce his entry into the towns and burghs as he passed along.

It was a curious fact in his aberration, that while fancying himself a General carrying Government despatches, it might

be from the Commander-in-chief in Scotland to the Commander-in-chief in Ireland, travelling by coach, and addressed and treated as a person of consequence by guard, coachee, waiter, and landlord, yet the ceremony of reception over, he made no objection, and thought it not beneath his commission, *to sleep in the stable*. A stall at the Black Bull, well made up, no doubt with clean straw and blankets and sheets, was in reality "his apartments," as he called them, his bed-room! How he contrived to reconcile the *show* with the *reality* of his position, would have puzzled saner heads than his.

His spirit of knight-errantry, exercised at a critical moment, upon one occasion, secured him the best of fare at the Black Bull. The cook, a winsome dame, between twenty and thirty, had been assailed by a presuming scamp of the worst class of bagmen. The General, who always retired early to rest, like all great commanders, when circumstances permit, was enjoying a sound and healthy repose, for there had been no previous dispersing of impertinent youths to annoy him. The girl, perhaps, knew where he lay, but Baggie did not, and thinking that his conquest would be an easy one, he made little ceremony in avowing insult. Finding flattery, and the usual arts of an accomplished rake ineffectual, he had recourse to force. The General, who seldom was at the trouble of undressing, rose growling to his feet, not quite satisfied as to the cause of disturbance; but it happened to be moonlight, he saw the struggle, and knew the voice of the cook, and in an instant sprang at the throat of the villain, dashing him down with great violence. In a very few minutes the iron grasp of the General would have finished his career for ever, had not the cook, alarmed, run for assistance, and saved her assailant when at the last gasp. Great was the praise awarded to General Brown, who seemed to know that he had done a noble action, and he never wanted a good dinner as long as the cook remained at the Black Bull.

The General, as we have said, was well respected and widely known. Immediately after dismissing the militia staff on the morning described, he proceeded to pay his respects to a number of the leading inhabitants. He was a patron of literature, in his own way, and usually amongst

the first places he called at was the office of the *Courier*—a newspaper started in the aristocratic interest, in opposition to the original Whiggish *Advertiser*. The General must have been a Tory in politics (Conservative was not then coined), for he never darkened the threshold of the latter journal: like a true soldier, he supported the existing order of things, independent of all considerations. He had accordingly visited his friends of the printing office, where he was always made welcome and kindly treated; and although of a grave and taciturn manner, he seemed to take considerable interest in what was going on in the newspaper world. From the *Courier* he had proceeded to "Peter Stewart's snuff shop," where, Peter being himself an old soldier, the General was always sure to have his great snuff-horn filled with the best rappee. Thence he had made a tour of the burgh, and been so plentifully helped from the barrels of the spirit shops, that, by the time we got out of the Academy, he was up to the charging mark, and busily engaged in repelling, as described, the obtrusive troops of impertinent boys.

Through the medium of the printer's devil—a rather smart, precocious, tricky limb of the Old One, named Willie Macmillan—we were a sort of privileged visitor to that, in our estimation, most mysterious place, a printing office. We can never forget with what rapture we gazed for the first time upon what is called *a form* of letterpress, and lay over it for hours, delighted that we could make out certain words, or a sentence; and we have always had a warm side to types ever since. But we are wandering from our text. In the printing-office we used frequently to meet the General afterwards. Early next summer it was we happened to be in the office rather late in the afternoon or evening: a buzz was heard outside; the windows were thrown open, and there appeared the General, bag and baggage, standard, long horn and all, followed by a crowd of delighted boys: up he came, with heavy tread, the four flight of stairs to the attic, which formed the composing room. He was attired much in the usual fashion, more gaudily, if possible, and as formerly, was on his route to Ireland with important despatches. He had arrived by coach, but in consequence of some crowding of "his apartments" in the Black Bull, owing to a *horse market*

next day, the General felt constrained to make the *Courier* his head-quarters. All hands cordially received him; and, relieved of his trappings, a plentiful supply of bread and cheese and ale regaled him satisfactorily. All this time he was serenaded by the crowd below, who only dispersed on finding that it was not likely he would be tempted to show himself again that night. We were curious, as well as the printers, to know what the huge wallet, termed the baggage of the General, contained. In this we were at once to be gratified, and certainly felt surprised to find that his *kit* was of a very approved fashion, consisting of more clean shirts than would have served the late Sir Charles Napier to go to India with! and, carefully preserved among other things, he seemed proud to show us a pretty large-print octavo Bible. The tin-case was opened, and the despatches unrolled for our particular inspection, and assuredly they were so couched and written, with seals and signets attached, that older heads than ours might have been deceived by their official appearance. With these the General was intensely uplifted.

We felt deeply interested in the singular character before us. There was a wild, unsteady glare in his grey eyes, and his words were few and far between, never dwelling upon one thing beyond a moment or two; yet at times we could fancy that an intellectual change came over his countenance, and he would laugh with a glee that might have been mistaken for the exhilaration of one entirely *compos mentis*. He seemed much amused with a flaxen-haired, burly little boy, about three years of age, son of John Leck, the pressman. Clapping the boy's head encouragingly, "Whose son are you?" said he. "My father's," said the little one, unconsciously. "Ah, ha!" cried the General chuckling—"you are your *father's* son, are you? Very good! you are a clever fellow; here is a penny for you!" The boy clutched the coin, and the General again clapped his head in token of high appreciation.

This little incident put the General into a happy humour, and he drew from his wallet a species of scrap-book, which had been made up for him by one of the printers of Aberdeen, if we are not mistaken, in which was pasted a cutting

from the columns of some of the northern newspapers, recording the prowess of the General in an encounter with certain excisemen or constables, we forget which, who had unduly interfered with him or some one else whom he felt bound to protect. The General, it was said, very quickly put them *hors de combat*, and the printers had placed the paragraph in the book that the chivalrous feat might be made known to his friends. Like all brave men, however, he declined to dilate on the encounter; in short, no further details of it could be elicited than what the newspaper writer had given.

The General passed two or three days at Ayr upon this occasion, making the *Courier* his head-quarters by night as well as day—a rug spread out on the floor, and one of the old wool-stuffed balls, that supplied ink to the types in these days, wrapped in brown paper, for a pillow, constituted his only bedding. The usual visits were paid—Peter Stewart filled his snuff-mull as formerly, and his friends the publicans made the General merry, so that each day was less or more signalized by sundry desperate charges up the High Street, from his stronghold the *Courier* office close.

One great annoyance to the General was a lump of a fellow from the north of Ireland, bare-legged, coarse-featured, deeply pock-marked, and clad in a species of grey frieze, who was called "Irish Sam." He had found his way across the Channel some weeks previous to the arrival of the General, and speedily attracted notice by his singular appearance, and his art in amusing the crowd. One of his chief feats was to write with a pen held between the two first toes of his right foot, and then he could rattle his fingers with great power over an old shutter or an old door, accompanying himself by whistling or singing in a manner very musical, and which delighted the boys beyond measure. Sam, like most of the worthies in Ayr at that time, was considerably patronized by the printers, and on *distribution* days, when they were not so busy, and could indulge more freely in conversation and fun, used to come up and exercise his musical talents on the *bulk-head*. Though a favourite, he was, at the same time, generally considered "more rogue than fool"—three parts rogue, perhaps, and one part fool.

Sam was somewhat put out by the arrival of the General. He evidently shrank from the wild gaze of the extraordinary personage in military costume. Still he endeavoured to conceal his agitation under a deal of swagger, and the noise of the bulk-head and the Braham-like power of his vocalisations. The first occasion on which the two distinguished parties met will ever be memorable in our recollection. As Sam rattled and sang, the General walked up and down, eyeing him intently. He had probably at best no great taste for the concord of sweet sounds, but the discovery which was soon made, that Sam was an Irishman, immediately upset all the equanimity of which he was master. Grasping his stick, and his eyes glancing fire, he rushed forward upon him, exclaiming, with uplifted arm, "Down, Derry, Down! You —— Irish scoundrel!" But Sam had been instinctively watching the General's excitement, and, avoiding the blow, he sprang terror-stricken over the bulk-head, flying down the close, on the wings of lightning. The General pursued him with all possible agility, but the object of his wrath was speedily beyond reach.

Sam stealthily adventured into the office more than once afterwards, with the view of making up friendship, but the result was invariably the same—having always to fly precipitately for his life. Sam not long afterwards left the town, and what became of him we cannot tell.

The General must long ago have paid "the debt of nature," but where or when we know not. The last time we saw him was in the town of Kilmarnock, in the latter end of 1826. It was a Sunday morning, immediately after the churches were rung in. It had rained heavily during the night, and still continued very wet. We happened to be looking through a window, contemplating the rolling gutters, and the myriads of old corks, sticks, and straws which the miniature flood was bearing onward to the great gulf of filth. Not a person appeared on the streets save the newly appointed superintendent of police, M'Callum, a Highlandman. The force, consisting of two men besides himself, had been recently embodied! Somewhat vain, apparently, of his official position, he was walking up and down the pavement, indifferent to the weather. Not far from the Police-office lane, General

Brown hove in sight, walking across King Street, apparently without any particular design, but quiet and orderly. M'Callum, with an air of totally uncalled-for severity, immediately collared him, and proceeded in an attempt to drag him towards the office. The General never remonstrated, so far as we could perceive, and we felt surprised at his forbearance. M'Callum was tall, of average strength, and he evidently felt confident of his prowess. Just as they were about to cross the raging gutter, however, we observed the General lean heavily against the superintendent, without touching him either with hand or foot, and over he went upon his back, the General falling above him, and lying there until satisfied that the gurgling and not pellucid stream had thoroughly soaked the superintendent to the innermost. Then he rose, looked round with a sinister grin of triumph, and walked off. M'Callum, meanwhile, getting to his feet, more dead than alive, was glad to hide "his diminished head" as fast as possible in the police-office, leaving the General to pursue his way unmolested.

Upon what duty the General fancied himself to be employed at that time, or where he went to, no one could inform us. In vain we looked for his burly figure in the streets for days afterwards. Dead he now must be, but die when he might, we are sure it was with "the harness on his back." Altogether he was a singular illustration of the eccentric phases into which mental aberration runs, and he no doubt enjoyed as much happiness in his imaginary greatness, and the chivalric exercise of his prowess, as most warriors experience in the realities of successful ambition. The General may be said to have belonged to a type of a former age, exhibiting in his erratic and unsettled temperament much of that sternness and integrity of purpose which, under a more lucid development, would have raised him to a high position in life. Such wanderers were not uncommon in former times, and everywhere their appearance was hailed as a sort of relief to the monotonous sobriety of sane life. The species must have died out, or their existence is hidden in asylums.

The foregoing reminiscences of General Brown appeared, in 1859, in the form of a little *brochure*, under the title of "Brown and his Friends, by Adam Black, A.M.," and was well spoken of by the Press. In a short notice of it, the Editor of the *Northern Ensign* says :—

"What reminiscences does this pamphlet call forth ! Well do we remember 'General Brown,' at even a later date than that named by Mr. Black. We think it was in 1831 that we last saw him, and can well remember how, on a fine September afternoon, during vacation, when engaged at play, we, along with others of a like age, were startled by the appearance of the General, approaching on the highway, after an eight days' sojourn in the neighbouring town, where he had broken windows, chased an urchin, now a shipmaster, to the top of a house, and almost killed himself and his antagonist, and committed various depredations which rendered his apprehension a great public necessity. Soon after that General Brown was reported to have died in Morayshire, from the effects of a spree, and we can well recollect the satisfaction which the intelligence created throughout the school, and with what relief we all ventured out at night thereafter.

"The description of General Brown, in the pamphlet before us, is very correct and life-like. In one or two details the writer wants information which might have been useful, such as the early history of the General, who was bred to the army, fought in the Peninsula, and distinguished himself in Ireland, becoming deprived of reason by an injury in the head. But to the many to whom the General was known, particularly in Aberdeenshire, where his name was as much a cause of terror among juveniles as that of Napoleon among adult rustics during the war with France, this little tome will be most acceptable. It will do more than call up the remembrances of the 'General.' It will awaken still more touching associations, which people are apt to forget when youth passes away, and they are involved in the whirlpool of business. It has had this effect upon us, and we thank Mr. Black upon that account also."

We feel indebted to the writer for the information thus communicated. We were not aware that the General ever

had been a soldier, but the fact accounts for and palliates his military hallucination.

About the same time, an anonymous correspondent wrote:—

"General Brown, when, in 1818, I was at School at Lanark, figured, for a considerable interval at a time, as a street pest. He was most affable to grown-up, and particularly to well-to-do folk; but ready, on the slightest provocation, to do war with boys, who were his perpetual foes. I remember the word '*screw*' was painful to him, and he generally got no other name than 'General Screw' from the small population. He never had a sword. A walking stick was indispensable to keep him in motion, and this he always had.

"About this time the General had gone to a Carluke fair, and during the night he failed in one effort at house-breaking, but succeeded so far in a second effort. He was caught in the act, and put into the hands of the constables. Some transaction of the kind committed in the burgh of Lanark led the magistrates, while the General was in custody on a larger charge, to put him on trial, and he was sentenced to be banished from, and *drummed out* of the burgh. The ceremony of drumming out I was a witness to, and really it was affecting to see the creature performing the march with what of dignity he could assume. In 1826, while at Glasgow college, I met the General on the foot-path on the highway leading into Duke Street, and of course addressed him. He was going to the Barracks, and was way-worn and dirty. Just before parting I put the question, 'When were you in Lanark, General?' He limped off uttering 'Lanark be damned!'

"He was apt to follow the drum or to be in public places. He visited Lesmahagow, Biggar, Carnwath, and Carluke on fairs or great occasions."

[In the country south-west of Glasgow, the General had a high character for honesty. He would have been trusted anywhere, and with anything. It therefore sounds strange to our ears that he should have been caught in the fact of robbery. Has our correspondent not mistaken the General for some other party?]

Another writer observes—"I distinctly remember General Brown. The first time I saw him was at Ayr races. His

appearance created considerable sensation on the course. He was dressed much as has been described—with a helmet of the 17th Lancers, and the regimental motto, "Death or Glory." In addition, "General Brown" was painted on it in legible letters.

"In one of his charges against the boys, he exclaimed, 'Some of you will spoil a market day, like Mary M'Kinnon,' alluding to a notorious character who had recently been executed for stabbing a man in a house on the South Bridge of Edinburgh. The *Shira* laughed heartily, as he happened to pass at the time."

"Robert Hamilton, Esq."

OF SAUNFIEL, SPALEFIEL, CLAYFIEL, AND WHITEBRYFIEL.

RAB was a character of much local notoriety, and such was his designation, as described by himself. He was what may

be called an innocent person, who molested no one, unless greatly provoked, and then his anger became terrific, though generally more severe upon himself than injurious to others; so much so that most people, even the boys, who tormented him sorely, refrained from pushing their annoyance to extremes.

Rab was a native of Ayr, and it has been said that his father, if not a gentleman, was at least, as the old song has it, equal to "the Laird o' Brodie," and that he was connected with the Revenue department. In the Ayr Register of Births the following entry occurs:—"Robert Hamilton, *s.* to John Hamilton, officer of excise, and Grizel Douk, *b.* May 29, 1756." This is probably the identical parentage of the notable Rab, and no doubt the discovery will be esteemed highly interesting to the genealogist!

Be this as it may, he was a character not likely to be soon met with again. It would be almost vain to attempt a pen-and-ink portrait of him, for no words can convey an accurate idea of his face. At the time we speak of, Rab must have been bordering on, if not beyond sixty. We once had in our possession a capital portraiture of him, in china ink; but what became of it surpasses our conjecture. He was of middle stature, or rather taller, generally dressed in a brown-black long-tailed coat, out at the elbows, small clothes or trowsers of any colour, just as fortune favoured, and he walked with a halt, drawing the one leg, as it were, after the other. But the face was the indescribable part of the man. He was always looking upwards, as if striving to peer through the rim of his old, broken, and almost crownless hat, which he wore pressed down so far as to shade entirely the upper portion of his face. Sometimes he wore the "triple crown," as it was called—three such hats stuck one upon the top of the other. His nose might be termed graceful; but his mouth, which could hardly be said to be ever in its natural position, was wide, and drawn towards the eyes, forming a sort of semicircle of wrinkles of the oddest description.

The foregoing woodcut of Rab is a sketch from memory, sufficiently faithful to give the reader some idea of his peculiar appearance. Rab was, at bottom, of a waggish disposition, and the twinkle of his small, half-closed eyes,

with the up-turned wicks of his peculiarly-constructed mouth, at once bespoke the cracked, if not actually insane, humour of the man. His father died when he was young, and his upbringing devolved solely upon his mother, for whom, it is said, he entertained a strong affection. After her death he had no one to look to him, and he became a wanderer at large. The parish of Ayr would willingly have kept him, and the authorities placed him for some time in the Poor's-House; but he preferred a wandering life, roaming over, in regular periodical stages, nearly the entire bounds of the county. Beyond that we never heard of his venturing, except upon one notable occasion.

The visit of George the Fourth to Scotland, in 1822, created great excitement, no sovereign of Great Britain having crossed the Border previously since the stormy days of Charles I. and II. It was the dream and talk of every town and village in the country, and, as a matter of course, Ayr was not behind others. Even Rab himself became infected with the Royal fever, and went about muttering that he "micht gang to Embro, to see ye King."

In prospect of this auspicious event, a loyal citizen, and enthusiastic admirer of every thing connected with Burns, the late Mr. David Auld, had two elegant chairs manufactured from the rafters of "Alloway's Auld Haunted Kirk," one of which he meant to present to the King, and the other to Sir Walter Scott. The King's chair was richly embroidered, and Mr. Auld kindly had it exhibited to the denizens before being sent to Edinburgh. One of "the merry lads of Ayr" persuaded Rab that, if he went to Edinburgh, besides seeing the King, he was sure, being a native of Ayr, to be admitted to the presentation.

Rab accordingly decided on making the journey, and started in high expectation for the capital. On the road he lived, as he generally did, by his wits, and although he had to sleep a few nights by the way-side, he at length arrived in Edinburgh, nothing the worse of his fatigue. Some of the citizens of Ayr who saw him in Edinburgh, used to describe his dumfoundered look, as he gazed on "the palaces and towers" of Edina, the crowds of people, and immense preparations for receiving the King. He was quite bewildered, and forgot

all about the chair. The King having duly arrived, and the excitement over, Rab fell into his old knowing, sauntering habit. Going down the High Street, his attention was taken up with the high houses which line both sides of it, and he got unconsciously into a crowd. Something about a chair caught his quick ear (for he could either be deaf or sharp of hearing as suited him); and listening for a little he heard a ballad singer chanting the well-known ditty composed on the occasion by Sir Alexander Boswell:—

"Were ye at Holyrood,
Saw ye him there?
Saw ye meikle Geordie,
Sit in his chair."

Rab instinctively jumped to the conclusion that this meant the chair presented by Mr. Auld, and immediately inquired at some of the bystanders where he could see the King sitting on "the chair that cam' frae the toun o' Ayr?" Only getting himself laughed at, he chanced to meet a person from the "auld toun" whom he knew, and forthwith told him of his dilemma in such an excited state, that his friend was glad to escape from the crowd as fast as possible.

Whether Rab's desire was gratified, or whether the chair had ever been presented—the fact not having been officially announced—we are not aware; but shortly afterwards it was rumoured that Sir William Curtis, Lord Mayor of London, who accompanied the King, had given the presentation the go-by, and ordered the chair to be put into the strong-room at Holyrood, as an evil-disposed person had informed him that the rafters, out of which the chair was made, had been stolen from the roof of Alloway Kirk by "Cutty Sark."

Rab's wanderings throughout the county were annoying to the authorities, and so anxious were the Magistrates at one time to keep him in the Poor's-House, where his wants would be attended to, that they thought of restraining him by chaining a log of wood to his leg. It had the desired effect for some time, but such was his longing for liberty that he at length clutched up the chain and marched off unknown to the keeper, with the block hanging over his

arm. In this fashion he walked down through the streets to the ship-building yard, and being a favourite amongst the men, they agreed to his request by striking off the encumbrance. Rab shook the dust from his feet upon the good town in consequence, and did not return again for some years.

Numerous anecdotes of his pawky wit were continually floating, both while he lived and after his death; and for many a day the jocular laird of Doonside used to amuse his friends, in public and private, by telling stories, imitating the voice, and singing the rhymes which Rab is said to have himself composed. One of these was a short song on the Ayrshire yeomanry, called "Oswald's Cavalrie," Oswald of Auchencruive being Colonel or Captain of the regiment at the time. Of course the gallant deeds of the corps were duly dilated upon. Another of his ditties was in celebration of *a ninth part of a man*, who, on some occasion or other had offended him. The only portion of it at present floating in our memory is little more than the "o'ercome" —

"Ance upon a time, a tailor neat an' fine,
Spied a louse on his left shouther bane;
He took up his shears, and clippit aff its ears;
The louse gi'ed a roar, and ye tailor took ye door;
But he cam back wi' speed, when he thocht the louse was dead.

Spoken—Hit it owre the back wi' an elwand,
An' ye tailor drew stitch again, again;

Noo ye tailor was sae crouse, that he had killed a louse,

Acted—Jump up an' down the floor, up an' down the floor.

Cry, I kill a louse, I kill a louse,
And what can I, a poor tailor, do mair."

There was another ditty, recording the malpractices of "Blackguard Jamie Jellie," a small huckster in Ayr, who had incurred the ire of the mob on one occasion, by attempting to raise the price of meal at a period of great scarcity and dearth. It was a favourite amusement with the boys at night, when they caught Rab on the streets, to compel him to leap over a straw, or sing a song: generally he preferred the latter alternative, but not without a groan so deep and loud as to alarm the vicinity—"Oh! de boys! Oh! de

boys!" And then, in a see-saw manner, and monotonous tone, he would grind away most inaudibly and inarticulately "Oswald's Caval-ri'e," or "Ye tailor," or "Blackguard Jamie Jellie, O," plainly testifying how reluctantly he engaged in the entertainment. But promise him money, for he was fond of "filthy lucre," and the whole performance underwent a vivifying and exciting change. When offered as a reward, by one who wished to try his knowledge of the currency, with his choice of a sixpence or a penny, "O ay," said Rab, "I's no greedy, I's tak' the wee ane," clutching the piece of silver very nimbly, lest it might be withdrawn.

Rab was extremely fond of strong drink, whisky he could swallow like May dew, and as for "gude yill," he could have ducked and dived in it. It was incredible the quantity of ale he could have drank at a draught; and as for whisky, it used to be said that, put a glass in a stoupful of water, he would drink up the whole that he might be sure of it—"Ay!" quo' Rab, "an it war a mile to ye boddam!"

A character, somewhat like himself, named "Daft Jamie," from Glasgow, well known in that city, made a tour to Ayr upon one occasion, and the two worthies happening to meet, they agreed to splice their coppers for a quart of ale in Jean Culbert's famed ale-house in the Newton. The jug was placed before them, and Rab, taking up the flowing can, raised it to his lips, and swallowed the contents without drawing a breath. Laying it down, evidently refreshed, before his thirsty companion, "Ye see," said he, "that's ye Ayrshire fashion!" "And that," said the disappointed Jamie, grasping the empty jug and knocking him down with it, "that's the Glasgow fashion!" Rab's excuse for finishing the ale, was that he "wanted to see the bonnie wee flower at the bottom o' ye jug."

Although fond of strong ale, Rab was a zealous attender of the church, and the "godlie Mr Peebles," of the Newton, was his beau ideal of a clergyman, notwithstanding the opinion Burns entertained of him as a poet. The ministers of the Establishment in the old town were esteemed moderates by the more evangelical class of church-goers, amongst whom Rab no doubt ranked himself. On one occasion, for what reason we never heard, he had persuaded

himself to attend worship in the Old Church. He took his place on the stair, as was his wont in the Newton Church, but being rather late, he popped his head through the railings to learn the Psalm from some one below. That obtained, he drew back, but finding the passage obstructed by his ears, which were none of the smallest, he cried out in his alarm, greatly to the astonishment and amusement of the congregation, "O dear! what will become o' me! better couldna happen't! leaving my ain gude and godlie Mr Peebles to hear the drones o' the Auld Kirk!" By the assistance of the bedral, Rab was relieved from the novel species of jougs in which he had placed himself, and away he hilched, muttering something like a malison on "ye drones o' ye Auld Kirk!"

Shortly after this incident, Rab was met by the Rev. Mr. Auld, who inquired at him the cause of the disturbance. Rab explained the matter in his own style, "Well," said Mr. Auld, "you had better come again and hear me preach." "No, deed, sir," was the reply; "ye dinna preach, ye only read."

On another occasion he was met by the same Rev. gentleman, who was a fine specimen of the more tolerant of the clergy, always plain and kindly in his personal intercourse. "Well, Robin," he said, "how are you getting on? What is your news?" "Hoo!" said Rab, with one of his peculiar grins, as he peered upwards through the broken rim of his old hat, "I kenna, Sir, aqueill; only I had a queer dream ye ither nicht." "Ay, Robin," rejoined Mr. Auld, "and what might that be?" "Ou, Sir, I thocht I was lifted into ye cluds, an' I rappit at ye door o' heaven, an' ye angel speer't at me whar I cam frae. Frae ye toun o' Ayr, I said; an' then he speer't what kirk I belang'd tae, an' I said to ye kirk o' ye godlie Mr. Peebles o' ye Newton! Ay, come in, said ye angel, I thocht sae, for there has na been a saul frae ye auld kirk o' Ayr sin' ye days o' ye gude John Welsh!" So saying, Rab slipped off, leaving Mr. Auld to swallow the application as he best might.

The Rev. Mr. Cuthill, colleague of Mr. Auld, had, upon one occasion, asked a blessing on the breakfast at the Poor's House. When about to leave, Rab remarked, "O, ay, Mr.

Cuthill, there's surely a blessin' in the Puir's House parritch, for when I tak' a spoonfu' out they aye fill up again."

Rab had a sly way of drawing upon the charitable—especially of the fair sex. A lady once gave him a plateful of soup in her kitchen. After praising and supping it, "Ye'll ken Mrs. A." said Rab, naming a comely lady in the neighbourhood. "Oh, she's a fine woman, kind, unco kind, and bonnie, ay, bonnie is she no, just like yoursel'?' Weel, she gaed me a platefu' o' kail ae day, an' efter it was dune, a daad o' beef." The ruse was successful, and Rab could say that he had dined for that day.

He made strange remarks sometimes, generally with the view of eliciting money. "Ye're a Hamilton," we heard him say to a *bein* looking farmer one day at the Cross of Kilmarnock. "Ay," said the farmer, "how do you ken?" "I ken by yir nose," answered Rab. It so happened that the party had rather a well formed frontal development, and a gift of sixpence rewarded Rab for the compliment.

A grand funeral passed along the street of Ayr one day, on its way to the Auld Kirk Yard. It was that of a rich miserly old laird. "Ay, there he gaes," said Rab, "an' no a bawbee in his pouch."

It is curious to mark how unrestrained freedom is coveted by the most insane of men, as well as the lowest class of animals. Well might the old poet exclaim—"Oh, freedom is a noble thing!" Rab might have enjoyed comparative ease and comfort in the Poor's House at Ayr, but rather than undergo the restraint necessary in such establishments, he preferred to wander from town to town, enjoying what he called a "fat bit" to-day, obtained from the cook of some of the inns, and probably little better than starving to-morrow; imbibing to-day perhaps a stoupful of "sour yill"—which he relished more than sweet—to-morrow slaking his thirst out of a ditch by the way-side: sleeping at night, it might be, in a rick of hay, or at best in a stable among dirty straw. Often have we seen and pitied him, emerging from his place of so-called rest, on a cold, frosty winter morning, it might be, and proceeding to the well, which he pumped upon both feet and legs, the shoes and stockings, if such they might be called, never having been removed. This he did, as he used

to say, "to saften his corns!" Notwithstanding the extreme hardships to which he was subjected, he lived to be at least sixty-five, and might have attained to a much greater age but for his *penchant* for ale, and the thoughtless conduct of some parties about Old or New Cumnock, who, with a tempting quantity of "sour yill," his favourite beverage, mixed a doze of tobacco juice. Perhaps they intended only to produce nausea and sickness, but the experiment caused death! We never heard that the authorities took up the case.

There were a number of other eccentric characters—most of them contemporaries of Rab. We can only afford room for little more than a bare list of their names:—

"*The Flying Counsellor.*" Amongst the many notables of the "Guid Auld Toun," we must not forget *Quintin Muir*, the "Flying Counsellor." He had been bred a lawyer—hence the *sobriquet*—but he was not plodding enough to follow out his profession. There he might be seen—a tall figure, with a well-darned over-coat, reaching to his heels—standing at "Davie Auld's Corner," surrounded by a knot of idlers—to whom he is explaining some knotty point of law. He had the reputation of being a thorough local genealogist—and certainly he knew a vast deal about family history. He told strange stories of "the men of acres" in the district; but could never be induced to put them in writing. He seemed to have a lawyer-like repugnance to commit himself—so much so that if he saw any one of his auditory attempting to take notes, he instantly stopped short and decamped.

Quintin was believed to be a descendant of the Muirs of Auchindraine; but how he subsisted no one seemed to know. He lived at the Townhead with a sister, somewhat crazy like himself. The house was their own property. They had a brother, a seaman, who also had a little of the "bee in his bonnet," and when he came home from his voyages there was sure to be a row. He drank, and quarrelled with both brother and sister, and turning them out of the house, used to swear, he "would make them walk Spanish." The meaning of which was that they should "walk the plank," as the Spanish pirates were in the habit of

treating their unhappy captives. All the Townhead knew when "the Sailor" was at home.

Willie Mitchell was rather morose, and famed as a singer of psalms. He was latterly confined almost entirely to the Poor's-House, and at length, in a fit of passion, felled one of the inmates with a hatchet. His trial excited considerable interest, but it was clearly proved that he was not accountable for his actions.

Serjeant Shaw was another street notoriety—of innocent habits. After walking a few steps very composedly, he would stand still and commence, with extended arms, as if drawing something down from the clouds. This he called "*pulling down the moon.*"

Archie Murray gave recitations. He was rather excitable, however, and he and the boys were usually at war.

Kirsty Brown was famed for her street dancing.

Jock Nicol was the son of a widow, who kept a small tavern at the foot of the Boat Vennel. He had an unnaturally large head, and was weak of intellect; but was said to know something of navigation. In short he passed for a "dungeon of wit" in this respect, and his time was mostly spent about the harbour. He was fond of angling for *seys*, or *poodlies*, as they are called on the east coasts of Scotland, and might be daily seen at the point of the quay, seated among a lot of boys. When his cork disappeared suddenly under water, Jock would exclaim, "Ay, that's an auld ane." He had also the reputation of being a poet—but the quality of his rhymes may be judged by a single example:—

> Cooper Orr lives at the shore,
> Mak's barrels by the score.

David Haswell, or *Hassell*, as he was named for shortness, was the *Baron Munchausen* of Ayr. The public scavengers occupied a crazy tenement at the end of the "Auld Jail." He said he remembered when the houses extended all the way across the firth to Arran; and in a clear day the lum-taps were still visible.

He had often, he said, made voyages to Guernsey, and the ship he sailed in was so large that when she tacked about, the bowsprit swept the cattle off "Brown Carrick Hill;" that

upon one occasion a man fell into the kail pot, and it was necessary to launch the ship's boat to save him. On another, one of the men had his head shot off in a fight with the enemy, and David picked it up and stuck it on so quickly that he was scarcely aware of his misfortune. The captain remarked that, in the hurry, he had put it on the wrong way. "Never mind," said David, "he'll make a capital rope-spinner!"

David was an excellent shot. Upon one occasion, his ammunition being expended, and seeing a string of wild geese flying overhead, he fired off the ramrod, which skivered them like herring; the rod, falling down into a burn, killed a salmon, and the report of the gun sent him back on a hare that happened to pass at the moment.

David is said to have believed all his stories himself, for he stopt short at the least symptom of incredulity on the part of his hearers. He was so well known as a vendor of fables, that it came to be a saying of anything doubtful, "Ah, that's a *Davie Hassell*."

There were other celebrities, in more recent times, who must still be remembered by many, such as *Blood*, *Jamie Rumpie*, *Daft Gib*, who "could neither work nor want," &c.

Of a different stamp, no doubt, were *Tallyrand* and *Jackie Houlston*, both persons in business, but fond of devilry, and wits in their way. Jackie was agreeably surprised when the post-man delivered a letter one morning, containing a check for £1000. He had never seen such a document before, and ignorant how to proceed, he consulted his friend Tallyrand. There could be no dubiety about the matter, the letter was addressed to "John Houlston, Esq., Ayr"—all right—the only perplexity being as to who the kind friend was that had sent him such a plentiful supply of the needful. Jackie went to the bank, and got the money, and the first thing he did with it, was to drive Tallyrand and himself in a carriage to Maybole. There they dined at the inn in a manner suited to the characters assumed—Jackie as the British Foreign Secretary, and Tallyrand as the great French diplomatist of that name. The affair got wind, and all were eager to congratulate the *barber* on his unexpected accession of fortune. It turned out at last, that the money was

not intended for Jackie at all, but his namesake of *Houlston & Co.*, who had not long before begun their mining operations in Ayrshire. All the money, however, was timeously recovered from Jackie, save what he and Tallyrand had so innocently spent in their frolic to Maybole. Tallyrand was so named from his having a halt in one of his limbs.

Johnnie Dickie kept a small shop and dealt in various wares. The boys used to annoy him a good deal by running off with the end of his reel of twine, asking lights, and *pluffing* powder at his candle, &c. At one time he sold pies, which were fired in an oven behind the shop. The back wall of the oven had formed part of the old Tolbooth, and was not quite secure. He repeatedly missed some of the pies—never taking out as many as he put in. Various of his attendants were blamed for the theft. At length he resolved to watch the oven himself—the darkness of his shop showed the interior of the oven all the better. At length he saw one pie beginning to edge quietly away, then another, and another! Mad with fright and anger he shouted—"D——n the pies! catch the pies! whaur's the pies gaun to?" The magic operation was explained by the fact, that the boys had discovered the ricketty condition of the oven wall, and having excavated a hole of sufficient dimensions, they nightly succeeded, by means of long hooked wires, in regaling themselves with "Johnnie Dickie's" pies.

Midsummer and "Kipper" Fairs—Arran Boats.

BEFORE steam-boats had drawn the mainland and islands so closely together, the Midsummer, or July Fair, was looked forward to by the merchants of Ayr with high hopes of "turning the penny" to advantage. It continued nominally for two days—Thursday and Friday—but longer practically. People came great distances from the interior—from Dalmellington and all round by Doon and the Carrick borders—to buy and sell plaiding, horses, cattle; and transact general

business—arriving often a day or two before the statutory opening of the fair. As early as Monday morning the bay might be seen in the distance covered with a fleet of tiny sailing craft from the island of Arran, and other portions of the Argyleshire coast, appearing like so many midges, or crowding the harbour, as if the *Vikingr* were once more on our shores, or the King of Man had marshalled his war galleys upon an expedition against the Britons of Strathclyde; and then what a landing of potatoes, fish, and smuggled whisky, and what a gibbering of west Highland Gaelic.

These mountaineers found it easier to cross the Clyde to Ayr—a distance of about twenty miles at the broadest—than to attempt the long and difficult passage of the Clyde up to Glasgow—where, no doubt, they might have made certain purchases at a cheaper rate; but the saving in time, and expense of conveyance, more than balanced the difference.

While the fair lasted, the town exhibited an animated appearance, both night and day. At midsummer there is but little darkness, and the Highlanders—men and women—might be seen strolling about at all hours, evidently enjoying the novelty of the thing. They seldom went to lodgings, except in the house of a *frien'*—preferring to take a nap, as opportunity offered, in their own or a neighbour's boat.

The rabble, or blackguard portion of the youth of Ayr, took a merciless delight in annoying the Arran people when they found them strolling about the streets; and "Tip Murray" and his gang were always on the alert for mischief. Though they suffered much, the poor people seldom complained, or attempted to retaliate.

Many of the citizens relied upon this annual visit of their island countrymen for a supply of "beef and potatoes"—in the shape of a live heifer or boll of meally dons; and eke a keg of "peat reek," unknown to the exciseman. The usual mode was, before taking the harbour, to bury the whisky in the sands, somewhere about the "water foot" of Doon, or among the Prestwick knowes—from whence it could be taken up at convenience.

On one occasion, however, about 1822, two boatmen, more adventurous than their compeers, had the temerity to

steer right into the harbour, in broad day, taking up an outlying position in the Ratton Hole, for the harbour was crowded with vessels, great and small. It was filled to the gunwale with potatoes. The quays, as usual at the fair time, were quite alive with idle onlookers, many of whom suspected that "John Barleycorn" lay hid under the apparent load of "ground fruit." There were tide-waiters in charge of the harbour at the time, John Grange and another, whose name we forget. Whether they had been told that smuggled whisky lay hid under the potatoes, or of themselves suspected the fact, we cannot say; but they boarded the little wherry—much to the surprise and annoyance of the boatmen. The wind was blowing a fresh breeze right out to sea at the time, and without losing a moment, not even a word having been spoken, save a whisper in Gaelic, one of them took charge of the helm and the mainsail, the other having cut the mooring with a hatchet, hoisted the foresail, and about went the wherry, carrying the officers down the harbour, amid the cheers and shouts of the crowds on both sides of the river. In vain the officers shouted for help, in the king's name, and signalled for boats to come off to their assistance. The Arran men kept steadily to sea, and away with them as far as the eye could reach. No doubt, after having given them a thorough fright, by threats of drowning, and otherwise, they were at last landed safe on some *known part of the coast*, from whence to thread their way home the best way they could. Poor old Grange never could think to hear of his midsummer excursion afterwards.

The Newton August, or "Kipper Fair," was an occasion of much jollity by the inhabitants on both sides of the bridges. It does not appear in the Almanac, nor was it perhaps a *fair* in the use and wont sense of the word—no business was transacted, although it had, perhaps, been originally intended otherwise; but the occasion was kept up as a holiday. The carters belonging to Newton, members of the *Whipmen's Society*, dressed in their best attire, and mostly wearing the old broad blue bonnet, flowing with ribbons of gaudy hue, and mounted on horses equally decorated, made a procession through the town, stopping at all the leading public houses, where they were served with a dram and a

taste of kippered salmon—hence the local name of "the Kipper Fair."

The procession then held their way to the Newton sands, where a saddle, bridle, &c., were run for by all comers—the prizes being the gift of the Society. The races afforded much fun, from the unwieldy qualities and inefficiency of the competing animals. The races over, the greater portion of spectators retired to the public houses—there to enjoy themselves over "reaming swats," or whisky, and platefuls of *Kipper*.

The inhabitants of the Newton were at one time chiefly employed in salmon-fishing, in the Ayr, which they pursued in boats called *cobles*—stake nets being then unknown. It is supposed that from this employment originated the practice of the "kipper" treat at the fair.

At the *Ayr Races*, in September, haggis, sliced down, used to be the favourite accompaniment to ale or other liquors.

The Old Jail—Hangman's Death.

THE old Jail, with its steeple, was the first object that attracted the attention of travellers on crossing the New Bridge. It was a good specimen of the Scotch town-house and prison of the olden time. It is in reference to this building that Burns, in "the Brigs of Ayr," remarks—

> "The drowsy Dungeon clock had number'd two,
> And Wallace Tower had sworn the fact was true.'

This stately edifice was taken down in 1825, and most of the stones were employed in building one of the boundary walls on the Race Course Road. It stood with its face to the north, in the centre of the rising ground in Sandgate, leaving barely room for carriages to pass. The west side directly fronted Academy Street, or the "Schule Vennel," as it was called, and served as a winning post for the boys of

the Academy, who generally took a race down the Vennel when the "schule" had "skailed."

The entrance to its gloomy precincts was by a stair, consisting of nineteen steps, and when an evil-doer happened

The Old Jail.

to be lodged within its walls, he was said to have gone up "the nineteen steps." The youth had a wholesome terror of the steps, and were children to be frightened, "Old John"* and the steps had only to be hinted at. It was alleged that *black ghosts* with *white heads* had been seen on the stair-head, and no wonder, for many a criminal had there "paid the debt of nature." Two square holes, on the east and west sides of the landing, showed where the posts of Bailie Brodie's machine were placed when the law had to be satis-

* John Sillars, one of the burgh officers.

fied. Many a poor fellow there suffered death for crimes which are now only punished by penal servitude; about the year 1820, three persons, two men and a woman, were executed at the same time. The men were guilty of house-breaking and robbery, and the woman of wilful fire-raising—having set fire to the outhouses of a farm.

An extraordinary story is told in reference, if we are not mistaken, to this execution. A dove is said to have been seen hovering above the woman's head—the day became gloomy and dark, as if the sun had suffered an eclipse —and a fearful noise was heard, as if old John Curle and the Telegraph had been driving at full speed over the causeway. People fled in all directions, thinking the end of the world had come. The amelioration of the criminal code has happily removed such painful exhibitions.

Like all other towns where Circuit Courts were held, Ayr had its salaried "finisher of the law." The hangman about the period referred to, had a free house in the "Auld Tower," where he lived alone. He had been a soldier, but most people considered him rather imbecile, of a timid and retiring disposition. Of course no one held communication with him, the very name of *hangman* placing him beyond the pale of human society. He had therefore recourse to other companionships—and these were of the animal kind—mice, rats, and birds, several of whom he had so tamed that their gambols and music served to cheer the weary hours of his life. He talked a good deal to himself, especially in his solitary walks at night. He seemed to think that every man's hand was against him—seeking his life. He never bought bread twice from the same baker, lest he should be poisoned; and he brought his water from various springs in the neighbourhood, for the same reason. He was truly a *character*, and his name as *the Hangman* was familiar to every one, though few knew him personally.

One Saturday afternoon in 1824, he unfortunately broke through his usual habits of caution, and ventured down the High Street so far as to find himself within easy access of the harbour—then the great resort of promenaders. The barque *Hercules* of Ayr was discharging timber at the time. He went on board to witness the operation. A heavy log

was just about to fall from the stern port-hole, and the cry of "let go" from the hold warned the crew to unship their handspikes—for at the time they were not attached to the capstan. The men succeeded in doing so, all save one, who, finding it impossible, cried to the bystanders on the deck, of whom there might have been half a dozen, to stand clear. With the recoil of the rope the capstan flew round violently, ejecting the hand-spike with great force. It struck the hangman on the side. The poor fellow neither spoke nor uttered a cry, but placing his hand on the spot, and turning up his eyes, with a dejected countenance, as if he were saying to himself, "Ah, I might have expected this," he walked away, evidently in great pain. He reached his solitary abode, but no one cared to follow him, uncertain whether they would be admitted.

Part of the Hangman's duty was to ring the bell of the "Wallace Tower," but when Sabbath came, no bell was heard to toll. Few were aware of what had happened, and as few thought of disturbing him in his solitary home. In fact, a kind of supernatural dread of the man, from his profession, seemed to animate almost every one. Monday passed—Tuesday passed—still no sound of the bell. All kinds of surmises were afloat as to the Hangman's neglect of duty; but at length the accident came to be talked of, and the Bailies causing the door of the Tower to be forced open, he was found dead upon his humble couch.

No official inquiry was made into the circumstance, but no doubt was entertained that the blow from the capstan was the cause of death. He was decently interred in the "Auld Kirkyard"—the last salaried official of the kind that Ayr is likely to require. A local rhymester, who might be a wag, but little of poet, gave vent to the following impromptu on the occasion :—

"The burglars now may loudly crow,
And doers of misdeed;
No more the bad ones he'll off-throw,
'Tis true—the Hangman's dead !"

Smuggling—Agency of "Auntie Bettie."

We have a great respect for the memory of "Auntie Bettie." She was our first landlady when we first left our mother's leading strings, to battle with the world for bread. She lived in what was then considered an aristocratical portion of Newton—Garden Street—where she had been born, and where her friends had property. She was then well up in years, but healthy and active, and to eke out her slender income, kept one or two young men as boarders. She had seen a good deal of the world as a servant in genteel houses, and only became married at an age when frequently women become widows. She had been brought up at home in the sternest principles of Presbyterianism—her father being quite a fanatical Macmillanite or Cameronian, and to the principles of that body she continued to adhere with a praiseworthy steadfastness. Her old and frail Highlandman of a husband belonged to the same body, and that appears to have led to—we shall not say—their *happy* union. Neil had been a seaman on board a revenue cutter in his younger days, and the psalm-singing propensities and prayers of his latter years seemed strangely at variance with the reminiscences—in which he liked occasionally to indulge—of his earlier.

He did not possess the most amiable temper or disposition, and was withal indolent as well as in questionable health. He sat generally by the fireside, coughing and spitting, and amused himself by splitting sticks: so that "Auntie Bettie," as she continued to be called by every body, as well as her nephews and nieces, had not only to support herself, but a crabbed and infirm old man.

She had no visible means of existence save the interest of a hundred pounds, which the old Cameronian had bequeathed to each of his daughters and which had gradually grown less by sundry inroads necessity had compelled her to make on the original capital, and the trifles arising from her boarders. Yet every thing went well with her—she always had plenty, and ready to assist her neighbours. It was a treat to see her at night, seated at the clean fireside, beside her old grumbeltonian of a husband, with spectacles on nose, and a

small round table before her, bearing an oil-lamp, the Bible, or Wodrow's Church History, or some other standard work of the Cameronian Church. She was, to be sure, an excellent cook—the science of which she had studied while in service, and could prepare a respectable dinner out of comparatively little substance. She was in reality a worthy woman—if anything—a little "too much" church,* but still possessing kindness of heart, and considerable tolerance for the playfulness of youth.

We had a fellow-lodger, himself a native of Arran, who occupied the same room with us. He was delighted at the prospect of the approaching midsummer fair, trusting to meet so many of his island friends and relatives. Happening to go home somewhat later one night, during the fair week, our surprise may be guessed when we found him, along with one or two other Arran men, busily employed in measuring off certain gallons of "bead-twenty-two"—the standard strength of Arran whisky—into a sort of stock-cask, kept by "Auntie Bettie." The Highlanders looked a little suspicious of us, but being assured, in gaelic, of our innocence, they spoke very friendly, and offered us a dram. We drank their health and wished them success. "Auntie Bettie" herself entered soon afterwards, and the process of supplying the stock cask was soon completed, when another dram round finished the proceedings. After placing the cask in its usual secure and secret place, temporarily depositing another seven gallon keg under our bed, the Arran men took their leave for the night.

The cat was now out of the bag. We understood how "Auntie Bettie" contrived to eke out her scanty means. She was well known amongst the more respectable class of people, and supplied the *Shirra* and most of the Court officials, as well as the gentry of Wellington Square, with "bead-twenty-two." Many of course knew that such was the case. Whether honest James Miller, the portly exciseman,

* A Frenchman in London, very inquisitive as to who and what were certain parties that happened to pass, his English friend got tired answering him. "That gentleman is a tailor," said he, and "dat?" "Oh, why a tailor." At length a burly flesher happened to catch his eye—"Who is dat?" "A tailor" was the answer. "By gar, too much tailor," said the doubtful foreigner.

who lived only two doors farther up on the opposite side, was aware of the fact, we know not. Perhaps not; at all events he passed and repassed, and was on the most friendly terms with "Auntie Bettie" so long as he sojourned in Ayr. Mr. Miller was an unassuming, gentlemanly person, and much respected, and his memory will not be the less revered because he neither heard nor saw anything of "Auntie Betty's" agency for "bead twenty-two."

It so happened that in crossing the new bridge, sometimes from a heated office in the winter time, we frequently caught cold, the bridge being greatly exposed to the north or southwest winds. Amongst other qualifications "Auntie Bettie" possessed those of an excellent nurse. On such occasions, a warm bath for our feet and a bowl of nice thin gruel, with a glass of "bead twenty-two" in it and some nutmeg, swallowed after being rolled up in the blankets, was sure to effect a thorough cure. We at last got so fond of the cure, that we are afraid, speaking conscientiously, we caught the ailment more frequently than we should. After this we occasionally assisted in running off the Arran men's kegs, and could sleep sound enough above three or four of them concealed under our bed. "Auntie Bettie," at the same time, was a very worthy person—a person of whom, in fact, we are desirous, after so long a distance of time, of speaking with the utmost reverence. It happened that a proposition was set on foot for building a Roman Catholic chapel. Amongst the warm supporters of that movement was the late Mr. Hugh Miller, cloth merchant, then a bailie, afterwards Provost of Ayr. He wrote letters in the *Courier* newspaper, urging subscriptions for the undertaking. This struck hard against the presbyterian ideas of "Auntie Bettie," and morning, noon, and night, we were assailed on the subject. Would no one volunteer a reply to Bailie Miller? She could not herself, otherwise she would have taken up the pen. At length we agreed to write anonymously to the *Courier*, in opposition to his views, on condition that she would supply pithy quotations from Scripture. "That will I, with delight," said "Auntie." So we took pen in hand, and, to our surprise, the *Courier* admitted our joint production. Bailie Miller replied, taking up our arguments. We

at him again, with still stronger bombshells from Scripture, and so the warfare went on, amidst considerable local excitement for six weeks—three rounds aside—after which our opponent was silent, and the public said we had the best of the battle. Little did the Bailie think he was contending against an old wife and a boy, and he looked very much chopfallen when afterwards informed of the fact.

One other reminiscence of "Auntie Bettie," and we close. We were at last really taken ill with something like inflammation about the lower part of the stomach, and could not walk upright for two or three days. We never left off business, however, but she declared we must submit to be bled. We agreed, and Sabbath, when she and every one else were at church, was the day appointed for the operation. We, of course, were to stay at home, and she took care to apprise the doctor, not to fail in calling upon us. We were sitting, after the church bells had rung in, anxiously expecting the arrival of the medical gentleman, when lo, *Miss Turner*, whom we had never seen before, appeared, with an apology from her father. He had been suddenly called to the country by a patient, but, taking out her case of lances, she said she would officiate in his place. We had never seen a female physician before, and felt somewhat put about by the circumstance ; but at once agreed. Baring our right arm, she bound it up in a very scientific manner, next put a cane into our hand that we might by its aid move the muscles, if required. Then she requested us to hold a soup plate in our left, and thus every thing arranged, she applied the lance with an effect and lightness of touch that we have never since felt, though frequently operated upon. The lady practitioner took two full plates of very bad blood from us, then bandaged up the arm, and on Monday morning we were at business, quite restored to health.

We mention this as all the more interesting, that there had been no previous talk, in America or elsewhere, of educating young ladies for any of the learned professions.

Black Johnstone.—Death of Farmer Dow.

We have elsewhere stated that smuggling prevailed extensively about the period of our reminiscences. Arran whisky was no doubt the chief commodity, but the exemption from duty on soap and salt of Irish manufacture caused a still greater demoralisation at all the shipping ports. Hawkers sold Irish soap almost openly in the country; and few were above the temptation of purchasing "bead twenty-two" of Arran water. The "Shirra" and some of the bailies, it was whispered, had often sat in judgment over a keg, not in the Court House, up the "nineteen steps," but in a well-known *howff* at "the Back o' the Isle." It was even said that the Rector had betrayed himself upon one occasion when the Collector was dining with him, by instinctively recommending the bowl, because it was made of the best *Arran water!*

Many of the farmers along the coast favoured and assisted the smugglers, and some of them were suspected of being resetters of their goods. On one occasion three cart-loads of whisky were seized by the Excise on a farm near Prestwick. Of course the farmer knew nothing of the matter! he could not tell by whom the whisky had been placed there; and there was no evidence to lead to a conviction. But the dealings of the smuggler were always attended with risk, from detection or information.

In 1824, a farmer of the name of Dow—a stout, much esteemed person—lost his life in consequence of this contraband traffic. "Black Johnstone," as he was commonly called, from his being a half-cast, was on his way home from Troon, in company with another seaman. It was night, and they had been drinking. Travelling along the sands, and when between Monkton and Prestwick, they came upon some smugglers, whom Dow, the farmer, was assisting to secret their cargo. Johnstone, it is said, threatened to inform the Excise officers, unless paid a guinea as hush-money. His demand was complied with; but he farther insisted upon having a keg of whisky. This was refused, and on his attempting to take it by force, a scuffle ensued. Dow

was a powerful man, and threw his opponent down, falling himself upon him. Johnstone drew a sheath-knife, and stabbed him in the groin. He was mortally wounded, and died soon after having been carried home. Johnstone fled.

The fatal event caused much excitement in Ayr and the neighbourhood. Dow was much regretted, and Johnstone pitied; for, although of violent temper, especially in drink, he was rather a favourite among the sea-going population of Ayr. He was, besides, a married person, with two or three young children; and the affair being wholly unpremeditated, his unfortunate position was generally commiserated. Still the authorities must do their duty, and placards were everywhere posted for his apprehension. It is understood that he passed the night after the murder in his own house, at the head of Garden Street. Next day the house was searched by Gunn, the well-known head constable at the time, but he could not find him, although report says he was concealed under the bed. He was afterwards secreted in a cellar in the carriage entry of the King's Arms Hotel, where his friends supplied him with food. He at last escaped at night, dressed as a female, in Telfer's sailing packet, the "Three Sisters," (which sailed from Ayr to Liverpool), the tide-waiter assisting him on board, little dreaming, perhaps, that he held the hand of Black Johnstone!

Johnstone was, we believe, a native of Maybole—at all events his boyish years were spent there. His father was a man of colour—not, however, of the negro stamp,—and his mother, Mrs. Johnstone, was a tall, good-looking Scotch woman. She was well known in Maybole and the neighbourhood as a travelling dealer in soft goods, and much respected. Her son was a sprightly youth, of good features, and a light, active frame. He was, however, always of a reckless temper, and did not hesitate to use anything he could lay hold of in his boyish quarrels. He went to sea, sailing as an apprentice from Ayr, and soon recommended himself by his seaman-like qualities. In short, "Black Johnstone," but for the mishap with the smugglers, might have speedily risen to the top of his profession.

The affair had almost been forgotten by the public—at

least, ceased to be talked of—when, about ten years afterwards, a native of Ayr, who was a soldier in a regiment stationed at the Island of St. Vincent, informed the colonel, while the regiment was on parade, that one of the spectators, a coloured man, was the murderer of Dow. The accused stoutly denied the charge; but on the soldier's persisting that he was right, the party was apprehended, brought to London, thence by the detectives to Ayr, where the authorities, with a large crowd, waited his arrival with the Telegraph—when, lo! he was found to be the wrong man! Many in the crowd at once saw that he was not "Black Johnstone;" but the Sheriff, to make sure, had him brought into the King's Arms Inn; and, after taking evidence, felt satisfied that it was a case of mistaken identity. The stranger was, of course, set at liberty; but whether he ever was compensated for his grievous apprehension and loss of time, is not known to us.

A son of the late Dr. Smith of Ayr, however, about three years after Dow's death, saw "Black Johnstone" on board a ship at Demerara. The poor fellow expressed deep contrition for what he had done; and, on taking off a glass of brandy, said—"Here 's to Auld Ayr: I would not care to go back, and die for the man yet!"

"James my Friend:"

HOW HE OUTWITTED BILLY O' BRIEN AND THE REST OF THE EXCISEMEN.

THERE are many shades of Scottish character; and not unfrequently may be met a demureness of countenance, under which flows a rich vein of ready wit and practical humour rarely to be surpassed. "James, my Friend" was one of nature's own in this respect. Perhaps he was more of a tactician than a wit—in the ordinary meaning of the term—with such a gravity of face as to be capable of hiding

the most outrageous contrivances. He was a perfect master in the art of deception, and so full of stratagetic devices that he never, even on the most sudden emergencies, felt himself at a loss. The gift he possessed in this respect was not the result of education, for he was but a peasant's son, and brought up in the neighbourhood of Ayr to the mechanical employment of a country wright. He had a good ear for music, however, and acquired a fair command of the fiddle. He could also sing a Scotch melody with considerable pathos, and was unsurpassed in those arch comic ditties with which the Scotch muse abounds. It may be well supposed, therefore, that he was, at night, always a welcome guest at "the farmer's ingle," where he happened to be employed. In those days, in the part of the country to which he belonged, there were no "bothies." The servants ate and slept under the farmer's roof, and all shared alike in the merriment or sorrow of the household. The younger years of "James, my Friend," were spent very happily in this manner.

In the course of business James found his way to Ireland, and got employment in one of the large distilleries of the Messrs Haig, near Dublin. Accustomed to carpenter work, he was a useful hand in an establishment of this kind. He had a brother, too, engaged in the same concern; but there was a difference in their character and temperament, which Billy o' Brien oddly enough accounted for by the fact, that Tom happened to be born in Ireland, while James was an out-an-out Scotsman. James and his Irish brother, Tom, were at length promoted to the charge—the one of the day, and the other of the night shift—each taking turn about of the one or the other. And in this way both brothers spent many years in the service of the Messrs Haig, whom they esteemed much as kind and considerate masters.

And now we must endeavour to introduce Billy o' Brien to the readers. In appearance Billy much resembled one of the distillery puncheons—broad and round. His hat was something of the quaker cut, originally black, but, through age and fatigue, had become almost brown. His face was rubicund, with what topers might call a "jolly nose," and his fiery-coloured hair and whiskers gave a decidedly hot appearance to his almost bursting countenance. Still it wore

a happy, good-natured expression, which was well supported by the bulk and rotundity of his nether man. His legs and feet were not quite in harmony with the otherwise unexceptionable corporation. The legs were somewhat defective in calf, and the plainness of his soles gave too much of a roll or hobble to his walk. He wore blacks, or rather what had once been black, and his white gravat was overlaid with "common brown"—for he was an inveterate snuffer. Stick a quill or two into the band of his hat, place a marbled stock-book under his left arm, and a walking stick in his right hand, then you have a complete sketch of Billy o' Brien, the exciseman.

Billy was no doubt a genuine descendant of the old Kings of Leinster. Intended for the priesthood, he had nearly finished the education necessary for that purpose; but falling in love, he got married, and that barred his admission to the Church of his forefathers. Hence he turned his thoughts to the excise, and, like Burns, through the influence of his friends, became "a gauger." At the time we speak of, Billy was stationed, in the interest of the excise, at the distillery of the Messrs Haig; and not being, as already hinted, much of a pedestrian, he had interest enough to keep him on duty where he did not require to tax his powers of locomotion in any extreme degree. Billy was therefore constantly about the distillery, either on the day or night shift.

James and he agreed well in general. He was of a social, talkative disposition, and James enjoyed it all the more that he had a slight stammering difficulty in his speech. He had a small room set apart for himself. It contained a writing desk, stool, a chair, and a sort of truckle-bed, where he could relieve the "vigils of the night" by an unconscious snore or two. Though averse to active exertions, he was nevertheless an excellent exciseman, in so far as accuracy and neat book-keeping were concerned—a capital figurer, and a first-class penman. When we speak of his accuracy, we mean that his figures stood well to one another, but they did not always represent the fact, unless in the sense and to the extent actually known to Billy. James, my Friend, as the sequel will show, was more than a match for him,

although, after all, the offence of cheating an exciseman was then, and perhaps now, considered but a venial one.

It was certainly a treat to see Billy seated of a morning at his desk, on the three-legged stool, his face rosier than usual with his long walk of a few hundred yards.

"Well, James, my friend, how goes it this morning?"

"Oh, pretty well, Billy; how is Mrs O'Brien and the family?"

"Och, now, you wicked wag. Isn't it you that knows as well as myself, that devil a chick has either Mr or Mrs O'Brien! Praise be to God, when we go from home, it may be said we take the house on our back, for the devil a soul we leave behind except the cat!"

"Beg your pardon, Mr O'Brien, I always forget the statistics of your household."

"Och, bother, with your fine *speeches*, James, my friend; let us go to work like honest men as we are. There, James, my friend, nib that pen—your eyes are better than mine: and now, to begin—you can tell me the depth of the guage, just as well as I could do myself, and that you know saves me a deal of trouble, running backwards and forwards. There, now, James, my friend, I have the measurement all down quite correctly. See, aren't these the right figures?"

"All quite accurate, Mr O'Brien." And so they were, according to the statement of James, who could not be said to be a disinterested party—since he preferred the interest of his employer to that of the excise.

"Now, I think we have done very well, James, my friend. Let us have a tinny of grog, a pinch of common brown, and take the world *easy*."

The tinny of grog produced, and the pinch of common brown duly administered, then the talk went on waggingly for some time, all the topics patent to Billy being repeated for perhaps the hundreth time.

"Do you know, James, my Friend, in coming *hurriedly* down the streets there, I saw large bills on the walls—'*money lost! money lost!*' Strange, James, my friend, for all the money lost, I never find any of it!"

"Faith, Billy, that's true; and no more do I. And do you think I would be so simple as hand over the whole to

the owner, on the vague promise of being *handsomely rewarded!*"

"No more would I, James, my friend; but you know, it's only right to be honest. I'll tell you what I have been thinking I would do, did I find a lump of money, some lucky morning."

"And what is that, Mr. O'Brien? wouldn't you keep it?"

"Ay, ay; but let us have another tinny of grog, a pinch of common brown, and take the world *easy*." This having been duly implemented,

"Now, James, my friend, I'll tell you what I would do [throwing great emphasis upon his words]. You see, James, my friend, I'd buy a ticket in the lothery, and if it turned out well, I'd return the money found to the party who lost it, and keep the overplus of the ticket to myself! Now, James, my friend, wouldn't that be a very proper and honest way of satisfying all parties?"

"Certainly it would, Mr. O'Brien."

"You see, James, my friend, I have some good ideas in my head. Were I king of Ireland, do you know what I would do to restore *peace* to the country?"

"I should think that would be rather difficult, Mr. O'Brien?"

"Not a bit of it, James, my friend; I would bring back things to the *ould* original state. You know that there are two great causes of discord in this country—*religion* and *land*. I would abolish religion—knock down all the churches ever built by St. Patrick—who, by the way, was a Scotsman—and declare the land in common, as it used to be in the good ould days; so that there should be neither *rent* nor *tithes* to fight about."

"Very good, Mr. O'Brien; but how, in such a case, would you maintain yourself as king?"

"Och, sure, is that all the head you have? Would I not live by the free gifts of the people—the *calpas*, as you call them in Scotland. Och, how my cellars would run over with pure potheen, and my garners with corn and potatoes, all the voluntary offerings of the free and happy people of Ireland!"

"Indeed! the picture is very pretty, Mr. O'Brien; but I'm afraid it is two fanciful ever to be realized."

"Ay, ay, James, my friend, you are there again with your stiff, practical Scotch head, but that is not the fault of Billy O'Brien. You long-headed Scotch, you can't enjoy even a pleasant *dream;* but come, James, my friend, let us have another tinny of grog, a pinch of common brown, and take the world *easy*."

With such friendly indulgences from day to day, the time passed pleasantly enough. Billy, with his entry book and figures *all correct*, would wend his way good-humouredly home at the usual hour; while James resumed his duties in the distillery, satisfied that his friend had been considerably humbugged.

But the night-shift was invariably the season of Billy's highest glory. Comparatively secure against interruption, he sat in state in the little cabin, James, according to custom, acting as his *trustful* informant as to how the *guage* stood; and the books made accurately up, with a newly nibbed pen, then came the all-consoling tinny of grog, the enormous pinch of common brown, and the never-failing axiom to take the world *easy*, which latter word he always pronounced with the genuine Hibernian brogue.

"Now, for my night-cap, James, my friend; you know I might catch could in my head; and that would be a pity for Judy's sake. Poor, dear creature, she has to sleep all alone this weather."

"And what of that, Mr. O'Brien, seeing the little good she has got of you!"

"Ah, ha, James my friend, you are there again with your dry withering Scotch humour. By dad! you know where the shoe pinches! But, come, another tinny of grog, and take the world *easy*, James my friend; we'll get into better and more loving trim by and by."

"Never fear, Mr. O'Brien; you know we are always good friends."

"Troth, my boy, I hope we shall long jog on life's journey, a pair of *Siamese twins* in that particular. But, I say, James, my friend, have you ever been thinking of how to

get rich? To make money, James, is the great secret of this world."

"That is an art far above my genius, Mr. O'Brien."

"And so, in troth, I'm afraid it is far above mine. But I often think, James, my friend, how delightful it would be just to have command of a mint, a never-failing store of money, so that one could make every body happy around them."

"And so it would, Mr. O'Brien."

"But, come, James, my friend, another tinny of grog—a *dream* comes across my vision, and I'll see it all the better for another drop, and a pinch of common brown. But you are not drinking fair, James, my friend; take another swig, and show you are a man of the right sort, James, as I know you are."

"Well, Mr. O'Brien, I must confess I am a little anxious about the mesh to-night. I should like to have it produced in superior style, for the honour of the firm you know; but here's to you, notwithstanding; meanwhile I shall fill another tinny."

"Och, by the powers, you're a good Scotsman, James, my friend, and right honest to your employers. May you never die!"

"But what about the *dream*, Mr. O'Brien."

"Och, I was going to forget. What a fine thing it would be, James, my friend, had I as much money as I could tell, as the vendor of the stucco lambs sings—there's one thing certain, I should not be here doing the dirty work of an exciseman. For any thing I would care, the people might sing with your poet, Robie Burns,—

> "We'll mak our maut, we'll brew our drink,
> We'll dance and sing and rejoice, man:"

all which they might do for Billy O'Brien, had he but a mint of his own. Och, I see the happy ould gentleman in my mind's eye. There he is sitting in his elegant country mansion, with a whole tableful of jolly fellows round him. They have just finished a dinner that would make an alderman lick his lips, and are now drinking champagne in goblet fulls, just as you and I, James, my friend, are sipping our humble tinny of grog. Again, I see him rolling into town,

in his bran new barouche, every passer by giving him a hat in token of respect; and there, as he enters Dublin, the multitude of beggars (and it is a great pity, James, my friend, that ould Ireland has so many poor), are bowing the knee to him, and showering all the blessings of holy mother church upon him, as he scatters handful after handful of goold and silver among them! But the picture is overpowering, James, my friend; so let us have another tinny of grog, and then for 'honour's truckle bed.'"

James, for reasons which will afterwards appear, was nothing loth to replenish the tinny, and by and by he and an assistant had the honour of stretching Billy on his truckle-bed, singing—

> "When Brian was wed, he went to his bed,
> And all the girls came flocking in," &c.

"And now, James, my friend," said Billy O'Brien, as, wrapped in his cowl, he stretched himself at full length, and drew the covering over him, "just put the *keys* of the spirit pump an-under my head. You know it will be sometime yet ere you need to run off the mesh, and just waken me up when you require them."

This was duly and civilly done by James my Friend, and in a few moments Billy O'Brien was soundly enjoying his accustomed snore.

And now, as Burns says of the Devil, James had "business on hand;" and that was to run off as much of the whisky as he should deem prudent before Mr. O'Brien awoke. The keys were quietly abstracted from under Billy's head, the pump was set-agoing, and all hands at work.

In a comparatively short space of time, several puncheons had been filled from the huge mesh vat—more might have led to detection. So the keys were replaced under Billy's head, and by and by James began to waken him up.

"Come, Mr. O'Brien, you are sleeping too long. We must have the keys of the spirit-pump."

"By all *means*, James, my friend," said Billy, scratching his head, half awake. "But, James, I had a *dream*—and

such a *dream!* I thought I heard the spirit-pump, thump, thumping away overhead! But you know, James, that could not be, as the keys were all the time an-under my head! It must have been a *dream.*"

In this opinion James, with surprising gravity, entirely coincided.

The spirit-pump was now set to work of new, and Billy, as usual, entered the number of gallons run off according to the veracious statement of his friend.

Such was the mode in which James and Billy got through with their work. Billy, all simplicity and confidence, James intent on defrauding the revenue—perhaps as much for "the fun of the thing" as for his employers' sake—for, it is not alleged, that his efforts in this way were ever rewarded. He and O'Brien were on the best terms; yet, for diversion, he sometimes feigned high displeasure, particularly if late in appearing at the night-shifts. This happened more especially on the Sundays, when the distillery had to be opened by Billy, who, in virtue of his office, carried the keys—the presence of an exciseman being indispensable in such cases.

On one occasion a full hour had elapsed before Billy arrived, all puffed and blown by the walk. James stormed —"kept waiting all this time on you, Mr. O'Brien, the men idle, and the work at a stand."

"Och, bother, James, my friend, you are always in a flurry. There's your brother, Tom, now, he is civil, he never says an angry word; but to be sure he's an Irishman, and you're a Scotsman—all fire and turf—fire and smoke. But, James, my friend, say no more about it—bring a tinny of grog, have a pinch of common brown, and take the world *easy.*"

"But what the devil detained you, Mr. O'Brien?"

"Troth, James, my friend, I was in bed, and got up precisely as I heard twelve strike, but" * * * * *

James, of course was demolished by an excuse that no one could have thought of save Billy O'Brien; and the night-shift, with its tinny of grog and amusing conversation, went on in the usual way.

At length, though no one could find fault with Billy's

books, in so far as they agreed with themselves, yet they did not agree with those of others in charge, and poor O'Brien was like to get into a mess about it. James, as in duty bound, stood by his friend. He insisted with the supervisor that there was an error in the measurement of the great copper vat itself, and that it ought to be readjusted. This was at length agreed to, and a day agreed upon, when the supervisor, with a whole posse of assistant excisemen, were to make searching inspection. James had his plans matured by the day appointed. The party were let down into the huge cauldron by means of a ladder, and Paddy, who had charge of it, was specially instructed *not to be forthcoming* when wanted to let them up again. He accordingly pulled up the ladder, that it might not be in the way of the gentlemen, and disappeared with it. The copper had been allowed to cool as much as possible, still there was considerable heat in it, and coupled with the confined air of the place, the Excise officials soon found themselves pretty much in the predicament of the fishes, under slightly different circumstances :—

"The sun's perpindicular heat
Illumined the depths of the sea,
And the fishes beginning to sweat,
Cried, d——n it, how hot we shall be!"

The work of adjustment at last brought to a close, the supervisor, wiping his brow, lustily shouted for the ladder. No one answering, he shouted again, the smelting heat being heightened by the feeling of helplessness. Still no reply. Driven almost to frenzy, the excisemen—for all of them now joined in the cry—continued vehemently to implore relief from their intolerable position.

James at last appeared, and feigning great wrath at Paddy for absenting himself, ran hither and thither, bawling "Paddy, you scoundrel, where are you with the ladder, and the gentlemen wanting out! You vagabond! you shall not be another day in this establishment. Paddy! Paddy! you rogue, where are you?"

"Here, Sur," said Paddy, in a voice apparently a long way off. "Arn't I coming as fast as I can. Holy murder! what a fine kick up!"

"Kick up, you scoundrel! Let the gentlemen up instantly, and then walk your pumps very smartly out of the premises, for there's no more need of you here!"

Paddy used all despatch in helping the gentlemen up, and they were greatly modified by the serious manner in which "James, my Friend" appeared to resent their confinement, Paddy having been ordered off immediately after effecting their liberty.

The whole affair was a nicely contrived scheme on the part of James, to effect a particular object. He found that the stock of unentered whisky had so accumulated, that the casks required to be carted away from the premises, for fear of detection. This would have been a hazardous undertaking had the excisemen been at large as usual, but confined in the cauldron, until every puncheon was removed, the operation was comparatively safe.

So well did James act his part that the supervisor actually interceded with him for Paddy, that he mgiht be taken back again, on account of his wife and family. Of course James complied, in deference to the gentleman; but the fact was, Paddy never had been off pay for an hour.

The measurement of the mesh copper did not, as might have been expected, bear out the averments of James, and Billy, though no actual charge could be preferred against him, was removed to another part of the country.

James, my Friend, himself at last got into bad health, from the effects of heat and exposure in the distillery. He became rheumatic all over, and walked with difficulty. Returning to Ayr, he set up a small public house in Prestwick, which for a time, was the resort on Saturdays of certain jovial acquaintances from the town, who there enjoyed a well cooked dinner, listened to his fiddle and his songs, and the sayings and doings, inimitable as related by him, of the good-hearted and simple Billy O'Brien.

The Wooden Shed.

NEAR to the *slip*, at the end of the south pier, there stood a wooden erection, composed of a pretty broad seat, planked overhead, and enclosed on all sides save towards the north. The reason of this was, that the storms then, and perhaps they do so still, blew chiefly from the south-west, and the north wind, though cold, was not so bitter as to blow the quids out of the mouths of the old Jacks who used daily to assemble under cover of the "Wooden House." In short, the building was especially constructed for their shelter.

As already stated, Ayr was a port of some importance in ancient times, and though latterly eclipsed by the absorbing ports of Greenock and Glasgow, still it never flagged in its spirit of patriotism. During the long war with France, the burgh furnished its quota both to the army and navy. The Ayrshire militia were the first of all the local regiments of Scotland, to volunteer their services in England or Ireland, for which reason they were dubbed the Royal. It so happened that they were chiefly required in *Still-hunting* in Ireland, and many a hearty evening we have spent with some of the surviving members—whose head quarters were at Ayr—listening to their tales of enjoyment in Ireland. Some of our contemporaries must recollect when, in the "piping times" of peace, the staff of the militia held their annual festivity in the King's Arms, how the chairman—"Bowsy Smith"—used to propose with due pomposity the standing toast of the evening—"The Ayrshire Militia, boys, and *Eternal Wars* and *no Fighting!*" Which said toast was patriotically responded to from all quarters: and no one old enough can fail to recollect how little Dr Craig, physician to the staff—fou as "sixteen pipers"—used to bring up the rear of the "drunk and disorderly."

The old tars of the navy had no such annual rallying guzzle; but they were fain to assemble under the "wooden shed," chaw their quid, and "fight their battles o'er again." It was a great treat to the boys of the Academy, and the youth generally, to gather round the *bothie*, and listen to the tales of the old men. No better incitement for seamen could

have been offered amongst the young—whether they aspired to be a Robinson Crusoe or a Nelson. The glorious "First of June," the "Nile," and "Trafalgar," were never failing themes; and strange, how coolly they talked about great actions, and their rewards! One valiant native of the "guid town" had been called to the quarter-deck, with the rest of the crew, to receive the thanks of both Houses of Parliament. "By the hooky," said he, "I would rather have had a glass of grog, any day." A sentiment in which his companions most sympathisingly joined.

What struck the uninitiated as very wonderful, was how they could tell the names of the vessels miles away, by "the cut of their jib," and calculate to a nicety when they would arrive in the harbour. "Here," one would say, "is the *Sister Ann*, coming with her heavy yards." "There," says another, "is the *Commerce*, with her bluff bows;" and "there," says a third, "is the *Enterprise*, she will be in the harbour in half an-hour—rakish craft that, an old American privateer—can show her stern in a stiff breeze to *them* steamers!"

The "old Salts" were stanch supporters of sailing vessels, and could not endure steam and the paddle system. Nothing to them like a frigate—they would stick by wind and water, and, like the Highlander, they could not endure the "Deil's reek" in navigation. The little steamer which came paddling up the river once a-week from Glasgow, during the summer, they surveyed with sovereign contempt—"that thing," says one, "give her a broadside, where would she be!" "Them chaps sailors!" says another, "they han't been nine miles from a cow's tail anywhere!"

Notwithstanding the adverse opinion of "the Salts," the steamer was looked upon by the community as a great step in the right direction; and although the passage from Glasgow occupied ten or twelve hours, many went by her, so as to enjoy, at leisure, the beautiful scenery of the Clyde. At length a joint stock company was formed, to run a steamer between Glasgow and Ayr, and a commission given to Napier of Glasgow to build one. The vessel was called the "Ayr of Ayr." Her early misfortune, in running down the *Comet*, has already been related.

But we are forgetting our early friends the "old Salts." A few, having been licensed by the provost and magistrates, found employment as pilots; and no doubt they were perfectly competent to steer a ship safely through the "bars o' Ayr;" but a local historian leaves his readers to infer that some of them could not always perform their duty, for, says he, (in 1832), the present licensed pilots, *who may be relied on for steadiness*, are," so and so. Whatever inference may be drawn from this invidious statement, it is not known that any of the pilots ever lost their *sea legs*, whether they carried too much or too little ballast; and certainly none of them ever were *suspended*, even although one of them could give no more satisfactory answer as to how he navigated the bar than that he *took his uncle Adam's, and Joe Boyd's house in a line, and kept to the town side!*

Several of the "old Salts" took to "the fishing," and others, whose timbers were well-worn, spent most of the day in walking up and down the quay, gazing at the vessels in the offing, and the arrivals and departures. When the weather happened to be wet and stormy, they took refuge in the "wooden shed."

But the most exciting scenes of all were when the strong south-west winds blew a hurricane, scattering the storm-caught vessels on the beach, or splitting them on the pier-heads, or the Black and St. Nicholas rocks. Then might be seen old Captain Wallace, better known as "Bowly Tam," with legs like parentheses, wending his way down towards the *Point*. He was an old man-of-war's man, stout and determined—a worthy descendant of the great hero family of Scotland. "The life-boat! the life-boat!" at once resounded through the crowd, and, sure enough, there the clumsy old-fashioned tub that she was, might be seen emerging from the boat-house, drawn by numerous willing hands down towards the slip. Placed in a position to be easily shoved off, old Tam, styled by popular acclaim, "Captain of the Life-Boat," would take his seat at the helm. He did so alone, without a crew, but the moment he was seated, the seamen rushed forward, actually struggling for a place, till the boat, fully manned, was launched by the strong-armed crowd. Then amidst the storm three cheers resounded for old Tam and his gallant

crew, as they ducked and dived, sometimes bottom up, amidst the heavy breakers on the bar.

The unaccustomed eye of a landsman could hardly tell what the object of all this enthusiasm and hardihood tended to, but far in the bay, might be seen a ship from foreign parts—understood to be richly laden—struggling against the overwhelming gale—her anchors dragging leeward, and every moment in danger of being driven on the Black Rock, or somewhere on the rough Prestwick shore. Following the course of the vessel, as she dragged slowly but surely along, you might now and then catch a glimpse of the life-boat, as it happened to rise on the wave, and at length, perhaps two miles northwards, you would find the ship ashore—the waves lashing over her; but all praise to "Bowly Tam" and his volunteer crew—there they were, wave-driven, ashore with the first quota of the ship's company—again to beat back for the remainder. Such was old Captain Wallace, to whom the brave hearts of "Auld Ayr" should build a memorial of "oak."

He was a worthy old fellow, and dearly loved his grog. He and certain old *chums* were in the habit of taking certain walks daily, and they had certain houses or stages by the way, at which they as certainly called, to partake of a certain refreshment. His friends used to say of old Tam, that his tumbler never was right. He either had too much whisky, and required a little more water, or too much water and required a little more whisky; so that whenever a person's tumbler was well filled, it used to be remarked, "Oh, that's a regular Bowly Tam!"

Burns' Cottage—Miller Goudie.

WHEN the "auld clay biggin'," in which Burns was born, first became a public house, who so proper to be the landlord as the Miller?

> "Ilka melder wi' the miller,
> Thou drank as lang as thou had siller."

And that miller was "Miller Goudie." It matters not whether he was the identical miller with whom "Tam o'

Burns' Cottage

Shanter" had, according to his "ain wife Kate's advice," so often sat; he was at all events a capital sample of millers in general—and more, his father—like he of the "Saut Market o' Glasgow"—had been a miller before him, so that if he did not know how to *mouter*, not only once, but twice or thrice —say there is no virtue in paternal descent.

The Miller was born at Riccarton Mill, on the banks of the Irvine, not far from Kilmarnock—a fine picturesque situation for a mill. In early life he found his way to the mill of Allowa', where, it may be supposed, he must have seen Burns occasionally. The Miller got married to Flora Hastings —a clever Scotch woman—although she may have been originally of English descent: and she has been heard to say that the Miller, in his young days, was about the "brawest wee man that ever stepped in shoe-leather." At the same time she admitted that she "married him in spite, to be upsides wi' anither sweetheart." Be this as it may, the Miller first started the "sign o' the bush"

Auld Brig o' Doon.

in a small thatched house at the end of the "Auld Brig o' Doon;" and here, he used to say, he last saw Robin Burns. The poet was on a farewell visit to his native place; and we have no doubt of the truth, as stated by the Miller, that he seemed dull, and said little. "We had just three gills thegither," the Miller used to say, "and he held down his head maist a' the time—only spearin' for this auld neighbour an' that; but he seemed unco dull an' wae."

Most people used to doubt this statement, but we always thought it true and characteristic. He came to see the place of his birth for the last time. What memories must have rushed upon his fancy—and almost all of them of a melancholy cast. He could not speak to the Miller of early associations, because the Miller was then a young man, and a comparative stranger in the district. He could not talk of literary matters, for he was no scholar nor poet—so, little wonder that Burns drank his share of the three gills in a meditative mood.

The Miller at length removed from the end of the Auld Brig to the Cottage—some time about the beginning of the present century. But the books of the Incorporation of Shoemakers could show the precise date, for they were the proprietors. The speculation was a lucky one, at least for Flora, if not for the Miller. "The Cottage" became the resort of travellers from all quarters, and as business increased, the Miller found his occupation gone, in so far as his services were actively required. Flora managed the bar and the finance department so well that he had little else to do than sit with his customers, and help them to consume the malt that Flora was always ready to supply. "Practice," the old copy books used to say, "makes perfection," and so with the Miller. He got so accustomed to the thing that he has been known to be three times top-heavy in one day; and was always ready, after a brief nap, to appear when called upon.

It is not the fashion for landlords to be gill about with their customers, and Flora so thoroughly understood the propriety of this rule, that she took care never to allow the Miller to carry a single sixpence in his pocket. The result was, as in all cases where people invariably sit upon other

people's coat-tails, that the town of Ayr folks began to consider him a hen-pecked scrub. But we never could enter into this feeling.

It was great delight, on a Saturday afternoon, to stroll along the shore, as far as the Doon foot, thence up "Greenfield Avenue" to the cottage, there to meet the old man, with his hair smoothly spread downwards over his brow, his old fashioned long coat, tight small clothes, and legs that, for symmetry, would astonish a cockney. And above all his coothy welcome, as he grasped our hand and said, "How's a' wi' ye the day, are ye no comin' in?"

We had always a good opinion of the miller, and he seemed to draw towards us, because, as he used to say, although he was a man of at least seventy, and we not above seventeen, "Man, we were born within a stane cast o' yin anither, you on the tae side o' the water and me on the tither." Yes, certainly, the river Irvine only divided our places of birth, but there was a broader river, the river of *Time*, which might have kept us apart, but for the genuine youthful spirit of the old man, which leapt the stream at a bound, and gave us the welcome he would have given to our *father*, his contemporary, had he happened to meet him.

It was well, perhaps, that Flora had the command of the Miller, though, like many others, when they get the upper hand, she sometimes did not use her authority very discreetly, and forced him to retire, simply because *she* thought he had got *too much*, in which opinion, of course, the Miller did not coincide. The guardianship of the guidwife reduced him to odd shifts sometimes. He "liked to be like ither folk when he gaed to the fair;" but Flora never could fancy him in any other position than Miller Goudie," *in*, not *of* Burns' Cottage. The Miller, in short, seldom had, as he used to say, "a bawbee to spen' wi' a frien."

We shall never forget, what we consider a noble instance of the old man's natural feeling. It so happened that we were about to leave Ayr, to embark in the great struggle of life, where, or how, we did not well know at the time; but before taking farewell of "Auld Ayr," it might, as Byron says, be for ever, we could not resist the desire of visiting the Doon, the Auld Brig, and the Cottage once more.

It was a Sunday morning, for we were going early by coach next day, that we walked along the beach to the Doon, struck up the wonted avenue to the Auld Brig, crossed it and returned by the new. Thence homewards, we were passing the cottage, when, who should we meet but the Miller coming out of his garden, fresh and tidy as he was wont to be. He was surprised to see us, and held out his hand as usual. We explained that, not thinking of calling, it being Sunday morning, we had not provided ourselves with the needful. He had heard of our intended departure, and there were no Forbes M'Kenzie acts in these days. "Dear me," said the Miller, "never mind, come in; it will be strange if you and me part dry mouthed; mony a gill I've got frae you; it's my turn this time."

We could not resist the kindly humour of our old friend, so we entered the room, where, upon an old chest of drawers, rested the sign-portrait of the Poet. "Noo," said the Miller, "ye'll ring the bell, an' order in a gill, an' I'll gie ye siller to pay for't." We did as desired. Flora answered herself, and brought the whisky; the Miller then rose, and going to the drawer, began to turn over what we deemed to be a lot of old nails. As he was *fumbling* amongst them, the door opened, and in stalked Flora, to take some things from a little press in the apartment. The Miller was dreadfully taken aback. Hurriedly pushing the drawer into its place, he resumed his seat. Flora said nothing, but departed. The Miller then resumed his search, and this time, not being interrupted, succeeded. "Dod, man," said he, as he again took his seat, "I was nearly catched there. Ye see next Tysday is the Ayr fair, an' I hae been gatherin' up twa three bawbees to be a gill, ye ken, like ither folk, and Flora kens nocht about it. See, there, tak' ye that shilling, an' ca' in anither gill, an' she'll no be a bit the wiser. Dod, man, it wad be an odd thing that you an' me, sae mony gills as we have had the gither, should part dry mouthed."

We could only express our hearty thanks for the Miller's disinterested kindness, and many a time we have since thought of the great hazard he ran in having his *posse* discovered by Flora. If she had, the poor old fellow could not have gone to the fair, and been his gill "like ither folk,"

and no one knows to what else the disclosure might have led.

Well, both the Miller and Flora have gone the way of all living. He died, if we are not mistaken, in 1843. By great care and industry, they had made a little fortune; yet strange to say, with all Flora's rigidness towards the Miller, he was no sooner gone than a change came over her. She seemed to miss him sadly, and she herself had to be looked after much in the same fashion as she acted towards him. Both, as we have said, are gone; but any one interested as to their appearance, will find an excellent representation of them by turning up the song of "John Anderson, my Jo," in the illustrated edition of Burns. They sat to the artist for the purpose, and he has made capital portraits of them both.

The admirers of Burns, who flocked to the cottage from all quarters, left scarcely an inch of room on table, chest, or chair, so as to add a new initial to the many thousands engraved before; and it cost old Flora a considerable sum annually to make up the deficiency carried away in *straws* from the bed in which Burns was born. But of all the relic-hunters we have heard, the Cockney beat them. He came all the way from London, prepared with a rope-ladder, by which to suspend himself from the lower parapet of the Old Bridge of Doon, and there he was discovered, one summer morning very early, hammering away with mallet and chisel. When questioned by the party who came upon him, as to what he was about, he said he was endeavouring to *cut out the keystone*, in order to carry it to London as a relic of the Bard! Astonishment took the place of indignation, and the Cockney was allowed to carry off a considerable portion of the stone. Had he succeeded in removing the whole, he probably would never have got farther on his way home than the bed of the river!

☞ *Should any of our readers discover inaccuracies in our "Reminiscences," or can add to them, our Publisher will be glad of communications on the subject. They will be duly attended to, in the event of a new edition.*